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Italian Theatrical Traditions and Shakespeare's Drama: Selected Essays

Richard Andrews

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Richard Andrews

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AIRSR
Anglo-Italian Renaissance Studies Reprints

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This book series aims to gather in a single volume a selection of prominent Renaissance scholars' productions, collectively unavailable on the market, but fundamental to the study of Anglo-Italian literary relations. The scope and temporal boundaries of AIRSR range from the Humanist engagement with the Classical legacy to the late seventeenth century, investing all genres of the Anglo-Italian Renaissance.

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(Cesare Ripa, *Allegory of the Printing Press*, 1645)

Contents

Introduction 9

Part 1
Dramatic Content and Dramatic Structures

1. *Gl'Ingannati* as a Text for Performance 19

2. Rhetoric and Drama: Monologues and Set Speeches in Aretino's Comedies 51

3. Printed Texts and Performance Texts of Italian Renaissance comedy 69

4. Scripted Theatre and the *Commedia dell'Arte* 91

5. Levels of Orality in the Published Scenarios of Flaminio Scala 127

Part 2
Women On Stage and Behind the Scenes

6. Anti-feminism in *Commedia Erudita* 149

7. Staging *La Veniexiana* 169

8. Female Presences on Stage. The Actress and the Female Singer in the Cinquecento and Seicento 185

9. Isabella Andreini and Others: Women On Stage in the Late Cinquecento 211

10. Isabella Andreini's Stage Repertoire: the *Lettere* and *Fragmenti* 235

Part 3
Italian Theatre in Shakespeare and Elsewhere

11. Shakespeare, Molière, and the *Commedia dell'Arte* 257

12. Shakespeare and Italian Comedy 275

13. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Italian Pastoral 307

14. *The Tempest* and Italian Improvised Theatre 327

15. Resources in Common:
Shakespeare and Flaminio Scala 349

16. The Italian *Comici* and *Commedia dell'Arte* 371

17. The Contribution of Siena to European Theatre 397

Index 433

Introduction

It is a great compliment, and a surprise, to be invited to re-issue a selection of my academic essays composed over a period of more than forty years. The flattering initiative comes from the Skenè Research Centre of the University of Verona.

The Skenè Centre proclaims in its website ‘a particular focus on the relation between Classical and Early Modern English drama’. The word ‘Classical’ is used there to indicate ‘ancient Greek and Roman’. In this volume, the relation which is addressed most frequently — particularly in the essays placed in Part 3 — is that between English drama and Italian theatrical precedent. Playtexts from Italy in this period can be called ‘Classical’ in a sense different from that intended by Skenè. My most recent (probably final) monograph, published in 2022, in fact uses the word to denote a genre of Early Modern comedy which consciously reflected ancient theatre, and which I see as having been produced continuously over nearly three centuries, in Italy and in France. Because of the existence of that recent volume, the essays chosen for this anthology pay less attention than they might have done to the ‘French connection’; though I have been reluctant to censor out all references to Molière.

When I first started reading Italian comedies printed in the sixteenth century, there was one which immediately leapt to my eye: *Gl’ingannati* (The Deceived), composed collectively in Siena by the Intronati Academy and staged by them during the Carnival of 1532. I was impressed to start with by its dramatic clarity and fluid dialogue. I came later to discover how insistently influential this play became in later decades, both within Italy and beyond. By coincidence I had already conceived a special attachment to the city of Siena — it is where I learned the Italian language properly, and made friendships which still endure. It gives me pleasure therefore

that the structure of this collection allows me to start the volume, and then to conclude it, with *Gl'ingannati* and the Intronati. (The Accademia Senese degli Intronati is still flourishing, and it is poised to celebrate its 500th anniversary in the year 2025.)

My studies of Italian Renaissance comedy have been motivated from the start by identifiable principles. I have always tried to treat a script or a scenario, conceived to be performed in a theatre, in a different way from a text composed just for reading. A literary text is complete on the page: once an accurate version has been established, nothing needs to be done to it before it is placed before its reader. By contrast, a theatre script is arguably not so much a text as a set of instructions: it tells us what should be said, and sometimes what should be done, in order to realise a work of art on stage. Every time a dramatic speech is delivered, its effect will be newly conditioned by a fresh actor and a new occasion. As historians and critics studying playscripts from the past, we are caught between two parallel but distinguishable aims. We want to determine, or guess, what might have been the effect of a play when it was first performed. Then we want also to judge which of its qualities are more permanent, which of them might still work in a similar way when revived by new actors, in new places, for audiences whom the dramatist could never imagine. On both levels, the concept of the play's 'effect' is paramount: for me, the 'output' of a work of art, its relationship with those who perceive and absorb it, has always taken priority over its authorial 'input'. What happened (we ask) when the lines of this playscript were spoken on stage, and thus became events as well as words? What can still happen even now, when those words then lead the way into dramatised feelings, interactions, and relationships — which for an audience are all also events? Unfortunately we were not there when the events were first staged; and for theatre performed earlier than the twentieth century there exists no recorded or filmed evidence to consult. It is fascinating, and fun, to embark on the deductions and speculations which theatre history involves, but we should always be aware of inevitable limitations. As I argue in essay no. 3 of this volume (*Printed Texts and Performance Texts of Italian Renaissance Comedy*), we need from the start to recognise what it is that we do not and cannot know.

As well as making that point, the essays grouped here in Part 1: *Dramatic Content and Dramatic Structures* mostly investigate components and structures in Early Modern Italian comedies which relate to, and may dictate, the effect which a performed script will have on an audience. It makes much more difference to a spectator than it does to a reader if a pair of twins is played by the same actor (no. 1: Gl'ingannati *as a Text for Performance*); if a solo speech is set deliberately apart from the dramatic action which surrounds it (no. 2: *Rhetoric and Drama: Monologues and Set Speeches in Aretino's Comedies*); if a dialogue is constructed out of rhythmic repetitions, rather than being what musicians would call 'through-composed' (no. 4: *Scripted Theatre and the Commedia dell'Arte*). The perceptions contained in that essay, about 'modular' dialogue structure and the 'elastic gag', have informed a significant proportion of my work since I first formulated them in 1991.

It also matters how and by whom a performance was created: on that level the 'output' of a play is directly affected by its 'input', and it would be counter-productive to insist on separating them. On Italian Renaissance stages, theatre shows composed by dramatists, and memorised word for word, were contemporaneous with other spectacles created by improvising actors, what we now call *commedia dell'arte*. This parallel existence of two overlapping types of theatre created a unique range of expectations for audiences; so an equally special approach is required now from historians. The whole topic relates to a larger line of inquiry which has been developing fruitfully in Early Modern cultural studies: the general co-existence, even interdependence, of oral and written transmissions of ideas and texts. It is no coincidence that my essay no. 5 was published in a collection of 2016 which dealt generally with 'Interactions between Orality and Writing'. The items now included in Part 1 assume that although there are obvious differences between written *commedia erudita* and improvised *commedia dell'arte*, the two practices used similar comic material and overlapped more than was once thought. The distinction proposed years ago by Tim Fitzpatrick (1995) between 'theatre as product' and 'theatre as process' underpins this observation.

Part 2 of the anthology, *Women On Stage and Behind the Scenes*, has a subject which is self-explanatory but which may none the less

need some comment. In my view there are three lines of inquiry possible under this heading. Firstly: in a patriarchal age, how did Italian Renaissance dramatists and devisers of scenarios depict their female characters? Secondly: over what period, and through what successive phases, was the participation of women in Italian theatre established? Thirdly: do individual dramatic texts composed for all-male casts show detectably different tendencies from those written with actresses in mind? My essays in Part 2 address some of these questions better than others, but re-reading them now I am reminded of the critical context in which they first appeared.

When I began my researches into Italian comedies, around the year 1980, academic writers had paid little or no attention to any of my three suggested questions. The few scholars who studied Italian Renaissance scripted comedy never discussed the treatment of female characters as a category; nor did they ever wonder about the effect of their being embodied by male actors. The larger number of writers investigating *commedia dell'arte* rarely talked specifically about the genre's female participants — even though it was the *arte* which first introduced professional actresses to Europe, and thus to the wider world. Over subsequent decades, of course, the critical landscape has greatly changed — to the extent that my bibliographical references in these Part 2 essays may now look unhelpfully sparse. Even now, however, one might argue that the handling of female characters in *commedia erudita* has been treated more often by scholars writing in English or in French than by those from within Italy. However, after crucial contributions from Taviani and Schino (1982) and from Ferrone (2014), Italian scholars do now recognise the pioneering importance of *commedia dell'arte* actresses.

Now, as I read more recent scholarship, and as I supervise the occasional doctoral thesis, I observe a significant surge in such female-oriented studies from younger scholars of all nationalities (and of all genders). They are now exploring the major influence of actresses — who were sometimes also dramatists or producers — on scripts, on theatrical performance formats, and on the cultural preferences of their public. A previous tendency to focus almost exclusively on Isabella Andreini (a tendency shared by me, in this volume) is being corrected by studies relating to other theatrical

women.[1] If my essays in Part 2 now seem dated, then that is actually a fact to be welcomed. They may still possess some historical status; and I can still claim a modest precedence (no. 8: *Female Presences on Stage . . .*) in my attempt to link or compare the early histories of the dramatic actress and the operatic *prima donna*.

Part 3 of the collection, *Italian Theatre in Shakespeare and Elsewhere*, offers a series of attempts to insist that Italian Renaissance plays, comedies in particular, were known to dramatists outside Italy, and that they fed important concrete influences into the drama of Shakespeare in particular. I use the word 'insist' here, because — to judge by ancedotal evidence — insistence seems still to be necessary. Despite the pioneering studies of Louise George Clubb,[2] despite the volumes of essays vigorously edited in recent years by my present General Editor Michele Marrapodi,[3] and despite the publications of my colleagues in the 'Theater Without Borders' (TWB) research group,[4] there are still academics who resist the notion that Shakespeare and his English contemporaries had access to Italian plays, could understand them, and absorbed ideas and practices from them. Shakespeare is permitted by such people to have been influenced by Italian (and Spanish, and French) novellas and other texts for reading — especially if they existed in English translation — but not by Italian material written for the theatre.

There is also resistance, perhaps more understandable, to the idea that stories and performance practices used by the Italian *commedia dell'arte* could have been known to English dramatists via hearsay and an unwritten theatrical grapevine. It is true that *arte* actors themselves did not visit England much, if at all, after the 1570s. It is true that surviving printed and manuscript texts which inform us now about the *commedia dell'arte* date mostly from after 1610,

1 All these developments are now reflected in a monograph by Laiena (2023). It contains a comprehensive bibliography of previous relevant studies.

2 Most obviously Clubb (1989); preceded and succeeded by a number of other essays. See also the retrospective edition of Clubb's essays (2024), published in this same series.

3 For example, Marrapodi 1998, 2007, 2010, 2014, and 2019 (which includes essay no. 16 in the present volume).

4 Two of my essays in this volume (nos. 13 and 15) appeared in 'TWB' publications.

so they cannot be seen as direct textual 'sources' for Shakepeare's plays. There is a difference, however, between surviving texts which inform us now and sources of information which have not survived but which were available to Shakespeare. It is quite clear that the collections of Italian scenarios which we can now read, drafted in the ealy 17th century, had the function of memorialising material which had been performed with success over several previous decades. What had been happening on *commedia dell'arte* stages during Shakespeare's creative lifetime was being summarised, after the event, in those paper records available to us. In the words of my essay no. 15, there were 'resources in common' which fed separately into the work of English playwrights and into scenarios assembled by Italian actor-managers (*capocomici*). If Ben Jonson's Corvino, in Act 2 of *Volpone*, could make detailed reference to *arte* masks and to a typical *arte* scene of marital jealousy, then Shakespeare would have known about those things too.

During my working life I have been salaried by the British public purse as a Professor of Italian, pursuing a chosen research specialism. Part of my job, as I have perceived it, has been to present to English-speaking readers as accurate an account as I could manage of similarities and possible influences between Early Modern theatre in our two countries — and also to note firm differences and divergencies, which are equally significant. In this collection, essays 12 (*Shakespeare and Italian Comedy*) and 16 (*The Italian Comici and Commedia dell'Arte*) were written most of all with such an aim in mind (and, as will be noted immediately below, they both sometimes say the same things). Essay no. 11 (*Shakespeare, Molière, and the Commedia dell'Arte*) is an attempt to align Italian improvising practices also with French dramaturgy, where similarities are much closer. That item stands as a sample of the larger project which eventually produced my monograph of 2022. Part 3 also contains three more detailed reflections on what is Italianate — and on what is definitely not Italianate — in some selected Shakespeare plays. And then we choose to conclude with the Italian and wider European influence of comedies written by the Sienese Intronati Academy.

When one assembles, or telescopes, seventeen articles written by the same person over a long period of time, there is a strong probability that the same things will be said in more than one essay.

Some of the items chosen here, especially in Part 3, certainly tend to echo one another. During past years, as I addressed academic readerships which were at least notionally different, as I wondered whether points that I had already made had actually been read and accepted, it sometimes seemed necessary to make those same points again. I did not know that the repetitions would one day be made more obvious by being gathered within the same few pages. An apology is due to readers who choose to peruse a number of these essays in quick succession. They may read a little too often about 'modular' dialogue structures and 'elastic gags'. They may tire of being told that *commedia dell'arte* scenarios contain material borrowed from *commedia erudita*; they may become impatient at hearing more than once that the plot of Shakespeare's *Tempest* is not original but Italianate; they may fidget at the reappearance of various other proposals which it would be tedious to list here yet again. I can only recommend that they read one item at a time, and take some time off between them. On one very blatant case I have made an editorial intervention. Essay no. 6 (*Anti-feminism in Commedia Erudita*) contained some paragraphs about the comedy *La Veniexiana*, and some detailed quotations from it, which were at the time of writing also being expanded into a whole separate article, now reprinted here as essay no. 7. That was now such a gross case of duplication that the relevant paragraphs have simply been removed from the essay. In addition, the essay on *La Veniexiana* appears here with a revisionist footnote no. 18 attached – it presents an alternative hypothesis about how the play might originally have been staged, a possibility which had not occurred to me by 1996.

In other respects, my main editorial intervention in this volume has been to include English translations of all Italian (and dialect) quotations, a resource which did not appear in the original printings. This makes some of the items longer than they originally were. I have also inserted a small number of more recent bibliographical references into essays from the more distant past; but any attempt to update the footnotes completely would have rendered them unmanageable.

In assembling this collection for print, I am particularly indebted to an anonymous External Reader who has given much appreciated support; to Professor Silvia Bigliazzi, Director of the Skenè Centre;

to Cristiano Ragni, of its editorial Board; and to Professor Michele Marrapodi, who has offered indispensable advice as General Editor of this series.

I also thank Edizioni ETS for undertaking the physical production of the volume.

Richard Andrews
Leeds, April 2024

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Part 1
Dramatic Content and Dramatic Structures

1

Gl'ingannati as a Text for Performance

The collectively composed comedy *Gl'ingannati*, performed in Siena by the Accademia degli Intronati on the last day of Carnival in 1532, has been the object of much critical and historical attention over the years, commensurate with the popularity and interest which the play aroused in the sixteenth century. The historical circumstances of its performance, and its possible political subtext, remain subjects for debate, and will not be addressed here. Its text is available in a number of modern Italian editions and English translations.[1]

Italian scholars have examined in masterly fashion the implications of comedy in general in Cinquecento Italy.[2] In photographic language, they have tended to offer wide-angle approaches. This present study operates in closer focus on a single play, aiming principally to show how the text translates into performance. My suggestions are intended to complement other

1 By 1982, the play had appeared in three anthologies, edited by Borlenghi (1959); Borsellino (1962); and Davico Bonino (1977-1978). A meticulous single edition was *La commedia degli ingannati*, edited by Cerreta (1980). One can now add the editions by Newbigin (1984) and Pieri (2009). My own English translation now appears on the website of the EMOTHE research centre based in Valencia, Spain.

2 Looming large in 1982 was Zorzi 1977, mainly about Ferrara, Florence and Venice. On Sienese theatre there was Seragnoli, *Il teatro a Siena nel Cinquecento*, which among other things established once and for all that Intronati plays had collective authorship. I also referenced two studies by Baratto (1971; 1977). See also the first essay in Ferroni 1980. From outside Italy, there was a collection of essays published by the Centre di Recherches sur la Renaissance Italienne under the direction of André Rochon, especially the series with the general title of *Les Écrivains et le pouvoir en Italie à l'époque de la Renaissance* (1973-1974).

approaches being made to this influential comedy, as well as to characterise some aspects of its dramatic language.

There are two main points which are revealed by reading the text of *Gl'ingannati* as a blueprint for performance. One of them concerns a single scene; and the other, in my view, radically affects the whole play.

***

At the beginning of act 3 of *Gl'ingannati*, three travellers arrive in Modena after a long journey. They are Fabrizio, young son of Virginio Bellenzini, seeking his father after a five-year separation[3] with the help of his tutor Messer Piero the Pedant and the gluttonous servant Stragualcia. Their discussion in scene 1, pointing out landmarks and characteristics of the city, reinforces the strong impression already given in the first two acts that the action of this comedy is set in a recognisably real time and space: they are accurate in their references to topography and heraldry, and to local catch-phrases, legends and customs.[4] Fabrizio's two companions also begin to reveal their characteristic foibles. Stragualcia has the obsession with food and drink which became typical of the stage servant (and later also of the Zani mask and its derivatives), while Messer Piero fulfils his stereotype by showing a love of sententious Latin quotations (which are in his case accurate, unlike those of some of Pedants in other comedies).[5] Altogether this is a nicely written scene in a realistic vein. The criterion, as in humanist comedy generally, is that of externally observable reality, moulded and controlled by that tendency to generalise and to categorise which informs most

3 This assumes that the date of the play's action is indeed set in 1532, five years after the 1527 Sack of Rome. Nerida Newbigin (1978) suspected that the play had been performed earlier than 1532, in which case the fictional time-lag may have been altered for successive versions.

4 Giovanni Aquilecchia has demonstrated the precision and consistency of the references to Modena in the 1530s. See his (1977). (However, his views in that article about the play's authorship can no longer be sustained).

5 See for example the Pedant characters in Francesco Belo, *Il pedante* (c.1529), Pietro Aretino, *Il marescalco* (composed 1527); Giordano Bruno, *Il candelaio* (1582).

Renaissance art. Indeed, at this stage of the genre's development, the degree of external realism is greater than that found in the Roman models which originally inspired it. The perspective set, which was unknown to Plautus and Terence, has created a much stronger visual illusion of a fixed fictional space on stage; the topicality and local colour have assumed more prominence than in Roman comedy; and the dialogue, as well as being in prose rather than verse, has achieved a persuasively casual air which could easily convince an audience that one might hear those very same word in a public street:

> PEDANTE . . . Hai tu sentito dire 'Sarestu mai la potta di Modena?' o vero 'Gli pare esser la potta di Modena'?
> FABRIZIO Mille volte. Mostratemela, di grazia.
> PEDANTE Vedila sopra il duomo.
> FABRIZIO È quella?
> PEDANTE Quella.
> FABRIZIO Oh! Questa è una baia!
> PEDANTE Tu vedi.[6]
>
> [PEDANT . . . Have you heard that saying about a person who thinks a lot of himself, 'He thinks he's the Hairy Mayory of Modena'. / FABRIZIO Of course. Is it here? / PEDANT Take a look up there, on the Cathedral. / FABRIZIO Is that the Hairy Mayory? / PEDANT That's right. / FABRIZIO But it's a joke! / PEDANT Well, there you are then.]

Altogether the scene establishes an illusion of a real contemporary setting, peopled by characters whose behaviour is plausible and individually distinct.

In scene 2, on a first reading, the dramatic language seems to be maintained. The travellers are accosted by two rival innkeepers, each touting for custom. L'Agiato, proprietor of "lo Specchio", advertises his establishment as a refined hostelry suitable for gentlemen of

6 "La Potta di Modena" is an obscene relief sculpture on the Cathedral tower (images can be found online). The popular saying quoted relies on a deliberate confusion of "potta" (female pudenda) and "podestà" (senior civic official). On the textual front, modern editors, copying from one another, often omitted the Pedant's reiterated "Quella" between Fabrizio's two brief speeches; but the error was remedied by Cerreta 1980, 173.

discrimination. Frulla, host of “il Matto”, makes a more down-market appeal, promising plentiful supplies of food and drink. Stragualcia is obviously attracted to the latter, while the Pedant owes it to his position to prefer the former. There is some lengthy badinage during which jokes are made about the tastes of various national and municipal stereotypes. Stragualcia eventually wins the argument in favour of Frulla and “il Matto” with a trick, playing on the homosexual predelictions of his adversary the Pedant:

> PEDANTE Il penso, Fabrizio, che noi aviam pochi denari . . .
> STRAGUALCIA Maestro, io ci ho veduto un figliuol dell’oste, bello como uno angiolo.
> PEDANTE Orsú. Stiamo qui. In ogni modo, tuo padre, se lo troviamo, pagarà l’oste.
>
> [PEDANT It seems to me, Fabrizio, that we’re very short of money . . . (*obviously inclining towards the Looking Glass*). / STRAGUALCIA Professor! The host over here has got a beautiful little boy, chubby as a cherub. / PEDANTE (*fatally tempted, changes his mind in a split second*). Well, let’s stay here. / Your father will be able to pay the bill, if we find him.]

The decision is made, the travellers choose “il Matto”, and the unsuccessful host is left resentfully threatening his rival.

On the face of it, scene 2 would appear to continue and broaden the appeal and the function of scene 1. The differences between the two inns and innkeepers are ordinary and plausible, and their public contest to attract custom, though clearly ‘good theatre’, must also have reflected a common enough practice of the time. All the characters (though Fabrizio, the employer and master of the other two, remains curiously passive and colourless) behave according to what we would call consistent characterisation and what the Renaissance would call *decorum*: the weakness which tempts Messer Piero will be alluded to and joked about elsewhere in the play. The scene has no repercussions later in the plot, but operates perfectly well as a pleasing interlude of local colour, a genre scene such as was to be developed more idiosyncratically by Aretino.[7]

7 It is worth noting that the earliest version of Aretino’s *Cortigiana*, where

Looked at more closely, however, the remarks about national characteristics (extending to one comment on an individual) are rather curious. It will be as well to quote them in full, omitting some intervening material:

> STRAGUALCIA . . . Tanta delicatezza è cosa da fiorentini.
> AGIATO Tutti cotesti alloggiano con me.
> FRULLA Alloggiavano; ma, da tre anni in qua, tutti vengono a questa insegna.

> [STRAGUALCIA . . . All this finicky eating is for ruddy Florentines. / AGIATO Indeed, sir, the Florentine travellers always stay with me. / FRULLA They used to, you mean. For the last three years they've been coming to me instead.]

> FRULLA Sapiate, signor, che questa ostaria dello 'Specchio' soleva esser la megliore ostaria di Lombardia. Ma, come io apersi questa del 'Matto', non alloggia, in tutto uno anno, dieci persone; e ha piú nome questa mia insegna, per tutto il mondo, che ostaria che sia. Qui vengono franzesi a schiera, todeschi quanti ne passano.
> AGIATO Non dici il vero, ché i todeschi vanno al 'Porco'.
> FRULLA Qui vengono i milanesi, i parmigiani, i piagentini.
> AGIATO Alla mia vengono i veneziani, i genovesi e i fiorentini.
> PEDANTE Ove alloggiano i napoletani?
> FRULLA Con me.
> AGIATO Lasciatevi dire. Alloggian, la piú parte, all''Amore'.
> FRULLA E quanti ne alloggiano con me?
> FABRIZIO Il duca di Malfi dove alloggia?
> AGIATO Quando alla mia, quando alla sua, quando alla 'Spada', quando all''Amore', secondo che ben gli mette.
> PEDANTE Dove alloggiano i romani? perché noi siam da Roma.
> AGIATO Con me.
> FRULLA Non è vero; non trovarete un che v'alloggi in tutto l'anno. Vero è che certi cardenali antichi, per usanza, vi sono alloggiati; ma tutti questi novi dan del capo nel 'Matto'.

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the evocation of a familiar ambience is at its strongest, dates from 1525. It was unpublished, but Intronati members could have seen it performed in Rome.

[FRULLA I must tell you gentlemen that the Looking Glass Inn used to be the best house in Lombardy. But since I opened up under the sign of the Fool's Cap, he doesn't get more than a dozen clients a year, and my sign is now more famous throughout the world than any other inn you can name. The French come here in droves, and the Germans too, to a man. / AGIATO That's a lie: all Germans lodge at the sign of the Pig-Sty. / FRULLA I get all the trade from Milan, from Parma, from Piacenza . . . / AGIATO And I get all the trade from Venice, from Genoa, from Florence . . . / PEDANT Where do the Neapolitans lodge? / FRULLA With me. / AGIATO Rubbish. Most of them go to the Bed of Venus. / FRULLA There's still plenty who come to me. / FABRIZIO Where does the Duke of Amalfi lodge? / AGIATO Sometimes at my place, sometimes at his; sometimes at the sign of the Sword, and sometimes at the Bed of Venus. Just as his lordship pleases. / PEDANT We come from Rome: where do the Romans stay? / AGIATO They come to me. / FRULLA That's a lie. You won't find a single one there from one year's end to the next. Or rather, it's true that some of the older Cardinals still go there out of habit; but all the newer ones head straight for the Fool's Cap.]

FABRIZIO Dove alloggiano gli spagnuoli?

FRULLA Io non m'impaccio con loro. Cotesti vanno al 'Rampino'. Ma che bisogna piú cose? Non c'è persona che vada a torno che non alloggi a questa insegna; dai sanesi in fuora, che, per esser quasi una cosa medesima coi modanesi, non giungan prima in questa terra che truovan cento amici che se gli menano a casa loro. Signori e gran maestri, poveri e ricchi, soldati e buon compagni, tutti corrono al 'Matto'.

AGIATO Io dico che i dottori, i giudici, i frati, i virtuosi, tutti vengono alla mia insegna.

FRULLA Ed io vi dico che passan pochi giorni che qualcun di quelli che sono alloggiati allo 'Specchio' non eschino fuore e non venghino a star con me.

[FABRIZIO Where do the Spaniards lodge? / FRULLA I don't get mixed up with that lot. They can stay where they belong, at the sign of the Fiddle. But we don't need to chatter any longer. There isn't a traveller on the road who doesn't rest under this sign here. Except the folk from Siena, of course, who count as honorary citizens of Modena, and have a dozen friends to put them up at home the

moment they arrive in town. Otherwise, lords and masters, rich and poor, soldiers and gay companions, all come running to the sign of the Fool's Cap. / AGIATO But the learned doctors, the judges, the friars, and all virtuous men come under my sign. / FRULLA And yet it's surprising how, after a few days, some of those who started off at the Looking Glass change their minds, and come over to stay with me.]

The arbitrary invention of new inn-signs ("Porco", "Amore", "Spada", "Rampino") establishes this as a game of verbal wit similar to the more sophisticated invention of *imprese* or emblems, which was a common pastime among sixteenth-century courtiers. In a certain sense it is a game played across the footlights, appealing directly to the audience and almost involving them. This can be seen not only in the deliberate appeal to the xenophobic prejudices of the Sienese, but from the mention of the Duke of Amalfi, who may well have been present in the audience and even in the place of honour,[8] and was in any case undoubtedly known to most of those present.

Thus the mode of dramatic realism established in 2.1 is cross-cut in scene 2 with a different theatrical mode, a more self-conscious one in which the actors exchange topical remarks with one eye firmly on the prejudices and likely response of a particular audience. If the Duke of Amalfi was actually present, this became at one point a direct salute to the presiding lord of the feast. Such a gesture was taken for granted in the more symbolic and occasional court entertainments of the Renaissance period, including the *intermezzi*

8 Alfonso Piccolomini, Duca d'Amalfi, was brother-in-law of the Marchese di Vasto and a leading captain in Charles V's armies in the period after the Sack of Rome. He was installed as Capitano del Popolo, effective ruler of Siena, from 1529 to 1530 and from 1531 to 1541 (Newbigin 1978, 220). A consensus of contemporary evidence identifies him as a member of the Intronati under the name of "Il Desiato" (though I have notice of one Sienese document giving this pseudonym to someone else). "Il Desiato" was a leading participant in the *Sacrificio* pageant which preceded the 1532 performance of *Gli ingannati*, which is mentioned in the Prologue, and the text of which appears in the earlier editions of the comedy. Nerida Newbigin offers an interpretation of the play whereby it approves of the Duke of Amalfi and propounds for Siena a reconciliatory foreign policy which is moderately pro-Imperial (1980, 123-34).

of comedies; but it was banned, in theory, from drama based on strict classical models, where according to the precepts of Donatus the fictional characters were not supposed to acknowledge the existence of an audience.[9]

But even this observation does not exhaust the complexities of the scene. As the *battute* and *frecciate* proceed, it seems that the whole of humanity is being divided into two categories: those who stay at "lo Specchio" and those who patronise "il Matto". Only a minimum of support from actors' gestures and from the inn-signs on stage should serve to establish that these are ideal categories, and not merely fictional locations catering for different tastes. The sign of the Fool already speaks for itself; and lest we should be puzzled by the Mirror, Messer Piero himself spells it out for us in advance, before the game gets under way: "'*Speculum Prudentia significat, iuxta illud nostri Catonis* '*Nosce ipsum*'. Intendi, Fabrizio?" (*The Mirror signifies Prudence, along with that saying of our Cato "Know thyself"*. Do you understand, Fabrizio?). "Lo Specchio" and "il Matto" are symbols, and the two inns are emblematic locations, representing *Prudenza* and *Follia*.

Once this is clear (and we can assume that it was clear from the start to an audience of 1532), the scene offers a series of statements, even judgements, about the politics and/or morals of identifiable groups of people. Some of those judgements are extremely obscure, but once we have seen the symbolic level on which the scene operates, we do at least know that a judgement is being made. The Florentines used to lodge at the sign of Prudence, but since three years ago (when some major political change occurred?) they have been coming to the sign of the Fool.[10] The French and Germans are placed with the Fool, before the Germans are reallocated to the imaginary sign of the Pig.[11] Milan, Parma and Piacenza are foolish,

9 See Wessner 1902-1908, 20: "nihil ad populum facit actorem velut extra comoediam loqui, quod vitium Plauti frequentissimum".

10 This, of course, is likely to have something to do either with the expulsion of the Medici in 1527 or the capitulation of the Florentine Republic in 1530. Sixteenth-century Italian editions of the play retain "da tre anni in qua"; but the French translation by Estienne (1540) has "depuis cinq ou six ans en ça".

11 Charles Estienne, in his French translation, clearly understands the

while Venice, Genoa and Florence are wise – an incomprehensible division, especially in its repetition of the Florentines, and perhaps the best indication that the text has been retouched for different occasions. The Duke of Amalfi goes wherever it suits him. Among Romans, some of the older cardinals (those created in the 'good old days') are wise, but all the more recent ones are foolish. The Mirror lodges "the learned doctors, the judges, the friars, and all virtuous men"[12] while the Fool receives all the rest: "lords and masters, rich and poor, soldiers and gay companions . . .". What is more, folly is steadily gaining on wisdom, with a constant stream of guests transferring their allegiance to Frulla. As moralists in all ages tend to decide, things are not what they were. (But when were they?) Only the Sienese are exempt, because when they go to Modena they can always stay with friends. Thus illogically, mingling the realistic fiction with the symbol and fusing them into a fleeting occasional compliment, do the authors remove all weight from their emblematic judgements, and admit that the symbolism too, like the realism and the xenophobic with, is no more than a passing game.[13]

In this single scene, the 'classical' dramatic mode of self-contained mimetic fiction has been overlaid with a more 'medieval' structure of generalising symbolism, expressed both through the words of the script and through more concrete emblems on stage. The two inns are not just functional locations in a fictional space: they are also symbolic locations which morally categorise those who pass in and out of them. They assume temporarily something of the character of 'mansions' in medieval drama, where the audience would attach a label to a character according to whether he or she came from Heaven or Hell, from the palace or the church or the hovel. If we had been dealing with English Elizabethan drama, this fact would be unsurprising, and would have been noticed long ago; since, in the English tradition,

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symbolic message when he transfers the French nation to the sign of the Mirror, and puts Englishmen and Flemings under the sign of the Fool.

12 Cerreta 1980, 180 rightly rejects the reading "i frati virtuosi" which appears in other modern editions; though it should be rejected on textual grounds alone, and not (as he claims) on grounds of implausibility.

13 Davico Bonino points out in his edition that both Sienese and Modenese were stereotyped as crazy; so their "exemption" from folly is probably a piece of jocular irony (1977-1978, 142).

symbol, emblem and extended metaphor (in scenery, properties and gesture as well as in words) remained fully integrated into the new-style *fabula* of classical theatre.[14] In Italy such symbolism would again be taken for granted in a less 'regular' composition such as a pageant, masque, *ballo di corte* or *momaria*. The reason why it has been overlooked in *Gl'ingannati* is that we do not normally expect a 'regular' Italian humanist comedy in five acts to function in this way. Classical comedy generalises via exemplary 'types' of humanity; but it operates by attempting to mimic the observable words and actions of those types, and not by the use of symbolism. This scene of *Gl'ingannati* may not be a totally unique instance in Italian comedy of the intrusion of other dramatic modes, but it is unusual enough to be singled out for special notice. It is perfectly consonant, of course, with the symbolic and occasional style of the *Sacrificio* pageant performed by the Academy on the night of Epiphany 1532, and may be explicable in terms of the close link in the minds of the invited audience between the two spectacles. Otherwise one can only say that the functions usually achieved by the *intermezzi*, in court performances of Italian comedy, have in this case been shifted on to a single scene which comes nearly half-way through the play.[15] The Intronati Academy, following the opinions of Alessandro Piccolomini, did not include *intermezzi* in its staging of comedies.

There are no further overt references in the comedy to the symbolic value of the "insegna del Matto" (after Messer Piero has been induced to enter beneath it, abandoning the self-knowledge

14 See as just one example, Saccio 1969. On the specific question of emblematic stage locations, Saccio writes of *Campaspe*: "The three houses thus come to represent three different points of view, three different ways of life in conflict with each other. Yet, as the three houses are juxtaposed on one stage, so the three ways of life go on in one kingdom. The setting is a dramatic symbol of the problem of the play" (22). Elizabethan drama is generally accepted to have used this kind of theatrical language, among others.

15 Three are in fact a few more brief acknowledgements of the place and occasion of the performance: Scatizza's mention of the "ultimo [di questo carnevale]" (2.6; 162); Crivello's gratuitous mention of the Sienese Torre del Mangia (2.8; 169); Virginio's complaint that the Intronati will make a comedy out of him (3.3; 181); and Messer Piero's compliments on the Sienese sense of fair play (4.2; 199).

of the Mirror of Prudence in favour of a chimeral promise of lust). As far as the text shows, the inn reverts to being simply an inn, the place where Fabrizio and his companions are staying: it is their stage 'territory' in fuctional terms, on a par with the houses of Clemenzia or of Gherardo and Isabella.[16] However, staging practices of 1532 did not include any moving of scenery. The inn does not disappear from the stage, and the audience will not forget the extra significance with which it was invested at the start of act 3. The game of Prudence and Folly, having once been played, will leave its mark on the remainder of the story to be enacted; and some of the assumptions and expectations aroused by the first two acts may well be permanently modified or even cancelled. In any case, with the first entrance on stage of Fabrizio in these same scenes, the audience have also been subjected to a major surprise of quite a different order. To investigate this, we must turn our attention to another feature of the play's performance, which radically affects the type of theatrical experience offered.

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Gl'ingannati is a comedy about twins and the confusion which they cause; and as with most plays on this theme, a large part of the plot depends on the fact that nobody on stage, including the twins themselves, realises that both siblings are circulating in the same community. The pretext for this ignorance is the traditional situation of a family separated by war or other adventure, a format which recurs in innumerable stories in comedy, romance and *novella*, whether they involve twins or not. In such a story, whatever the literary or dramatic genre, a 'happy ending' always incorporates the reunion and full recognition of every surviving member of the family; and in drama in particular the audience is usually treated to the pleasure of seeing the reunion take place on stage. Examples of this practice which are particularly relevant to our case are

16 I disagree with Bruce Penman who, in his Penguin translation, puts the house of Virgino and Lelia on stage. Virginio claims, in 3.7 (192), that his house is too far away for it to be possible to get "Lelia" (in fact Fabrizio) there unobserved; and there are no scenes which make use of Virginio's front door.

Plautus's *Menaechmi*, Bibbiena's *Calandra* (the first comedy to use twins of different sexes, with transvestite disguises), Aretino's *Talanta*; and, in the later English tradition, Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*. It would indeed seem only natural to see expressed in fully dramatic terms the healing of wounds, reconciling of differences and dissolving of misunderstandings by which comedy finally communicates its festive message; and in many cases the reunion is made the pretext for an emotional climax, which may be handled rhetorically (as in Aretino) or cathartically (as in Shakespeare), according to the skill or predelictions of the individual dramatist.

In relation to these expectations and patterns, the ending of *Gl'ingannati* seems curiously anticlimactic, even unsatisfactory. It is worth looking in detail at how the family renunion is dramatised.

The news which will untie the knot in the play is that Fabrizio has come home, and that Lelia in her boy's clothes can be mistaken for him, or he for her. The emotional reunions, if there are to be any, will be between Fabrizio and his father Virginio, and between the twins Fabrizio and Lelia, with servants or subordinates such as Clemenzia the nurse and Messer Piero the Pedant also participating. In fact Messer Piero recognises Virginio as early as 4.2, and from then on Virginio knows that his son is alive and in Modena. The expected emotional meeting between father and son takes place at the end of 5.1, contrasting rather sharply with the slapstick martial antics with which that scene opened. The next two scenes of act 5 are devoted to a slightly different kind of reunion, as Clemenzia softens young Flamminio's anger, and induces him to recognise and accept Lelia's devotion. To ensure that Lelia cannot be married to anyone else, the young couple are promptly bedded in the downstairs room of Clemenzia's house. From then on, the play seems on paper to lose its sense of plot direction and climax. 5.4 is a rather scrappy scene between Pasquella and the Spanish soldier Giglio, an aftermath of the more hilarious tricks she played on him in 4.6. Then Clemenzia's unnamed daughter,[17] who has not previously appeared, eavesdrops on Lelia and Flamminio making

17 The name "Cittina" is just Tuscan vernacular for the "Fanciullina" which designates her in the cast list (121).

love on the other side of the wall or door. In 5.6 we see the male twin Fabrizio together for the first time with his betrothed Isabella, their meeting having so far taken place off stage: but instead of a developed scene of emotional discovery (such as we get from their equivalents Sebastian and Olivia in *Twelfth Night*), they are given just one speech each of banal factual explanation before Clemenzia meets them. She simply gives Fabrizio a single hug of welcome, and ushers them both indoors.[18] Finally in 5.7 Clemenzia has a word with Virginio which is again brief and expository, and they too go indoors; leaving Stragualcia to speak the *plaudite* in a conventional manner, and to dismiss the spectators without their having seen the whole reunited household on stage together.

That this sequence of brief speeches and appearances could seem unsatisfactory to a contemporary reader is demonstrated by the French translation of the play by Charles Estienne, published in Paris in 1540. Estienne was actually moved to alter the end of the comedy, to the extent of writing some more dialogue. He repositioned the scene between Isabella and Fabrizio immediately after 5.3, and he considerably lengthened their conversation with Clemenzia. Next in his version comes the monologue of Clemenzia's daughter (the Spaniard having in any case been omitted from the play altogether); and 5.7 is replaced by a brand-new scene in which Clemenzia persuades both Virginio and Gherardo to resign themselves to the fact that Lelia is to marry a younger man. The admiration which Estienne expresses for the comedy as a whole, in his dedicatory letter to the Dauphin of France, makes it all the more striking that he should have found these concluding scenes unacceptable as they stand in the original.

Why does this comedy, which elsewhere displays such a sure touch in the distribution of its material and the pacing of its scenes, fail to come up with the kind of finale which its audience might expect? Why do we not see the joyful embrace of the twins? A glance at the rest of the play, and particularly at how the appearances of

18 Presumably into Clemenzia's own house, though it is not entirely clear. They have emerged from the house of Gherardo and Isabella, where they first met. The use of Clemenzia's house as a final meeting-place reinforces the view that the family home of the twins and Virginio is not represented on stage.

Lelia and Fabrizio are distributed, suggests one overwhelmingly probable answer to this question: the parts of the twins in *Gli ingannati* are intended to be 'doubled', that is they are played by a single actor – probably by a male actor, a boy, in 1532. A joyful embrace between Lelia and Fabrizio is a physical impossibility.

There is no precedent for such a casting decision in the comedy of the time, though one may well feel that it was bound to be tried sooner or later. Other sixteenth-century *commedie erudite* about twins prefer to use two actors, in order to effect the expected final reunion. Sometimes the two are brought on stage together in earlier parts of the play, so that a third party may hover between them in comic bewilderment, as happens twice in Bibbiena's *Calandra* (3.23 and 5.1). The 'doubling' technique, which involves a teasing, purely theatrical virtuosity for both actor and dramatist, nevertheless has a long history after *Gl'ingannati*. It is used frequently in scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte*. It returns to scripted theatre in Goldoni's *Due gemelli veneziani* (1747-1748), where one of the twins actually dies on stage, to make the finale easier to manage. It continues thereafter in modern farces such as Feydeau's *La Puce à l'oreille* (1907), where the doubles, a desperately respectable bourgeois and a sleazy hotel porter, are not blood relations but just coincidences. In a collection of scenarios from the seventeenth century in the Museo Correr, Venice (cod. Correr 1040) there are four *soggetti* which 'double' physically identical roles – including one scenario directly derived from *Gli ingannati*.[19]

Cast lists for early performances of humanist comedies are not often to be found, and there is none for the 1532 production of *Gl'ingannati*. An incomplete list of actors does survive, however, relating to the performance of the play in the Sanseverino palace at Naples in 1545.[20] On this occasion, "un figliuolo della signora

19 The titles concerned are *Due Flamminie simili* (no. 11 in the MS); *Zanni incredibile con quattro simili* (no. 21; reproduced and translated in full in Lea 1934, 602-9); *Due simili con le lettere mutate* (no. 29); and *Intronati* (no. 51) derived from *Gli ingannati*. By contrast, *Li Amphitrioni* di Plauto (no. 38) and *I tre capitani* (no. 44) are comedies of disguise, not of physical similarity, and they do not double any roles. For all these texts, see now Alberti 1996.

20 This information, summarised in Seragnoli 1980, 42-3, comes from a chronicle by Antonio Castaldo, who himself played the parts of Stragualcia

Giovanna Palomba" (a son of the lady Giovanna Palomba) is said to have played "Fabio", that is Lelia, and there is no separate mention of Fabrizio. There is no mention either of who played Clemenzia, Isabella, Clemenzia's daughter or the two innkeepers, so the omission of Fabrizio cannot be seen as conclusive proof. But the doubling of the parts is technically possible, it was taken up later in scenarios, and it explains the curious structure of the last act. Lelia, in female dress, goes into Clemenzia's house at the end of scene 5, and has a chance to change costume during the apparently gratuitous scene between Pasquella and Giglio. The eavesdropping scene which follows, as well as giving still more time, reinforces the illusion that Lelia is just inside Clemenzia's house consummating her marriage with Flamminio; so the emergence of the same actor as Fabrizio from the other side of the stage, with Isabella, is a piece of comic surprise based on virtuosity. The mood is then wrong for an extended tender scene between Isabella and a Fabrizio in whom the audience can no longer quite believe, so scenes 6 and 7 just inform us rapidly that everyone is content and that the right couples are going to marry each other. These final scenes may still be considered over-hasty, but their structure now at least has a practical explanation. The authors are responding to a technical problem which the spectators can by now see for themselves; and since they cannot reunite the twins, they prefer to admit the fact by playing an overt game, inviting jocular collusion between actors and audience. After the final exit of Lelia in 5.3, there is no further attempt to sustain fictional illusion or the suspension of disbelief. As was the case in 3.2 already discussed, the accent is on a conscious recognition of the mimetic and social ritual which has been played out by everyone present in the hall, on both sides of the footlights.

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The doubling of the roles of Lelia-Fabio and Fabrizio has implications for the theatrical experience provided by *Gl'ingannati* which go beyond the merely anecdotal, and beyond the justification of

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and the Prologue in the 1545 performance. The relevant passage is in Book 1 of the chronicle (71-2).

presumed deficiencies in act 5. In a play which has always been accepted as offering a blend of different possible moods,[21] the audience's response to what it will quickly recognise as a theatrical trick is going to be crucial in establishing the predominance of some moods over others.

In the first place it should be observed in general terms that, although the doubling of roles appears on one level to reinforce the fictitious illusion of the play, in practice it actually tends to do the opposite. We are accustomed, at performances of *Twelfth Night*, to pretending that we see identical features on the faces of the actors playing Sebastian and Viola, whereas in reality all we usually get is a similarity of feature plus identical clothes. This extra suspension of disbelief is added to all the others, and we tolerate the dissimilarity of the actors because we want to enjoy the story. Presumably this was also the case for audiences of Bibbiena's *Calandra* from 1513 onwards.[22] If the twins appear successively on stage with features which are really identical, then this extra act of tolerance would seem unnecessary, and a possible barrier to enjoying the spectacle appears to be removed. It is to be doubted, however, whether any human spectator could conceivably refrain from wondering how the effect of 'identity' has been achieved. Of the two possibilities – the use of twin actors, and the use of a single actor – the second will rapidly establish itself as more likely; and from then on, the audience will have part of its mind on the practical problems of quick costume changes, and on the acting virtuosity involved in playing two different personalities. This will not diminish the pleasure of the spectacle, but it will substantially alter the nature of that pleasure. If we add to that the strong probability, in the club atmosphere of the Intronati in 1532, that all the actors were personally known to most of the audience, then in the case of that first performance there would be a strong bias towards observing (with delight and approval, let it be stressed) just how well those practical problems were overcome.

21 Compare the judgements of Borsellino 1962, 197-8; and Salingar 1974, 214-18.

22 In Roman times, the Menaechmi twins would have worn identical masks, which sets up a third range of implications. The same is true of masked *commedia dell'arte*.

We cannot know whether on that first occasion the word had got around; whether the Intronati spectators knew from the beginning that they were going to see a youth of their acquaintance playing first a girl in male disguise and then her twin brother. There is, however, reason to suppose that the performers worked quite hard to keep the secret, and that they wanted their fellow Academicians and guests to take their seats without any expectations of this kind. The Prologue and the first two acts of the comedy go to some lengths to avoid revealing that this is a play about twins. There is no "Argomento" giving the family background before the action begins, and the Prologue gives no details of the plot beyond mentioning that there will be a Spanish character and that the play is set in Modena. Although the spectator learns in 1.1 that Virginio has a missing son called Fabrizio, and although acquaintance with comic plots might lead that spectator to anticipate that Fabrizio will appear at some juncture, there is never any mention in the script of the fact that Fabrizio is Lelia's twin. Here too there is a sharp contrast with *Calandra*, which conveys all the necessary facts about its twins in the preliminary "Argomento", and repeats most of them for good measure in the opening scenes of act 1. For spectators of *Gl'ingannati*, the appearance in 3.1 of a Fabrizio identical to the Lelia-Fabio they have seen in act 2 can (with luck and good planning) be a total surprise, to the extent that it may take most of that first scene for them to adjust to a new rapport with the same actor. It is for this reason that the first two scenes of act 3 are a turning point, as well as a kind of interlude, in the development of the story.

It is arguable, in fact, that after the appearance and exploits of "Fabrizio-Fabio" in act 3, the audience's view of "Lelia-Fabio" can never again be quite the same as it was at the end of act 2. To explore this, it is necessary to work through the play from the beginning, concentrating on the appearances of, or references to, one or other of the twins.

Leo Salingar (1974) has pointed out that in Lelia there are strong elements of the steadfast suffering heroine of the medieval romance tradition; and the selection of Sienese plays in Borsellino's anthology underlines how the Intronati were among the first to offer plays with strong, sympathetic female roles who move on a dignified level, and who are neither the perpetrators nor the victims

of humiliation or comic trickery. But Salingar has also observed that this role in Lelia is mixed with others. Like her predecessor Santilla in *Calandra*, she is capable of relishing the effect of her deception on other people, and thus of adopting the role of the sympathetic rogue or trickster with whose immoral inventions the spectator can connive. One cannot ignore the fact that, unlike Viola in *Twelfth Night*, she is systematically deceiving both her beloved master and the lady who has fallen in love with her outwardly male attractions. Shakespeare's heroine adheres to the strict letter of fidelity in her service to Orsino, tries to deflect Olivia's advances, and takes no initiative at all, relying on the course of events to solve her problems: "O time, thou must entangle this, not I! / It is too hard a knot for me t'untie" (2.2.40-1). Lelia initially prefers to do her own untangling. She tries to take advantage of Isabella's infatuation with her, using it to drive a wedge between Isabella and Flamminio; and whereas the *inganno* involved in Viola's disguise is more or less an accident, Lelia sets out from the very beginning to 'deceive' with a purpose.

This mixture of attitudes is shown immediately in Lelia's first and only appearance in act 1. Unlike Viola, she is seen from the start in her boy's disguise. A large part of her opening monologue is a rhetorical appeal for the conventional sympathy which an audience bestows on a suffering lover ("O che sorte è la mia!" — Oh, what a fate is mine!), and so on.) But she begins with what can only be described as a nervous giggle, contemplating her own sexual ambiguity with something half-way between fear and titillation (and at the same time, of course, informing the audience with her very first words that she is a girl in boy's clothes):

> Gli è pure un grande ardire il mio, quando io 'l considero che, conoscendo i disonesti costumi di questa scorretta gioventú modanese, mi metta sola ad uscir di casa! Oh come mi starebbe bene che qualcun di questi gioveni scapestrati mi pigliasse per forza e, tirandomi in qualche casa, volesse chiarirsi s'io son maschio o femina, e cosí m'insegnasseno a uscir di casa, cosí di buona ora.

> [Surely I am becoming quite shameless, when I think that in spite of knowing how lewd is the behaviour of these dissolute young men in Modena, I still choose to venture out of doors alone, at this hour! It would serve me right if one of those debauched youths

> were to seize me by force, drag me into some house, and decide to see for himself whether I am male or female. That would teach me to go out so early!]

Then, when Clemenzia appears, she takes the opportunity to mock and tease her in the role of an insolent youth, before revealing her real identity. In the ensuing exposition scene between the two, the note of pathos is perhaps uppermost, but the boldness, enterprise and even wit of Lelia are present in full measure. We also learn the fact, possibly crucial for a sixteenth-century audience, that during the Sack of Rome Lelia was imprisoned and probably raped by Spanish soldiers. This means that she is a woman who has lost her 'innocence', albeit through no fault of her own; and according to the curious view of female psychology prevalent in patriarchal societies it becomes more plausible, as well as more acceptable morally, that she should have been 'awakened' sufficiently to take the initiative in finding the husband (and therefore the social stability) that she wants.

1.3 is long enough to give Lelia a firm presence in the first act. In act 2 she is on stage for four scenes out of eight, and is the main subject of conversation (between her master Flamminio and her co-servant Crivello) in two more. We see her attempting to dissuade Flamminio from further pursuit of Isabella, and making fun of Pasquella with references to her true sex which only she and the audience can understand. In scene 4, Crivello's jealousy of "Fabio" is established. Then in scene 6 comes the crucial eavesdropping scene (theatrically quite complex by the standards of the time) in which Crivello and Scatizza spy on "Fabio" as he accepts advances and even kisses from an Isabella whose state of sexual rampancy has already been graphically described by Pasquella in scene 2. Lelia's subsequent musings on this event continue to combine elements of a comic *furba*, colluding with the audience in enjoying Isabella's error, and of a pathetic heroine in an insoluble impasse:

> Io ho, da un canto, la piú bella pastura del mondo di costei che si crede pur ch'io sia maschio; dall'altro, vorrei uscir di questa briga e non so come mi fare.

> [On the one hand I'm having the time of my life, bamboozling that silly wench into thinking I'm a man; on the other hand, I'm getting into a mess, and I don't know how to get out of it.]

However, in scene 7 she is shattered by Flamminio's express determination to hate Lelia Bellenzini for ever more. Her fainting and subsequent miserable soliloquy are a combination of dramatic irony (which is no longer comic) with pure rhetorical pathos, and she retires to Clemenzia's house in despair, her previous high spirits and enterprise quite deflated. During the following scene, Flamminio, hearing she has betrayed him, determines to take violent revenge on "Fabio", so that as well as being emotionally defeated she seems to be in physical danger. By the end of act 2 Lelia's fortunes have reached a crisis point which one would normally expect to come around the end of an act 4, and the anxiety which the audience may feel on her behalf belongs more to adventurous romance than to classical comedy.

It is at this point, with the start of act 3, that the audience's attention is entirely diverted, first of all by the surprise appearance (in the new role of Fabrizio) of the performer who has just played Lelia, and secondly by the festive symbolic games of Prudence and Folly in scene 2. During the game Fabrizio plays a less active part than anyone else on stage—as though the authors were nervous about their innovation, and wanted to break the spectators in slowly to the actor's new 'identity' before he is given something positive to do. Straight after this comes Virginio's scene with Clemenzia, where the old man has heard rumours about what is daughter is up to and is predictably but comically furious. The audience is reminded of Lelia's predicament, but this time in the context of her family's reactions rather than of the danger which threatens her from Flamminio. Thus a first sight of Virginio's long-lost son is followed by Virginio himself worrying about his daughter, whom he risks 'losing' in a different sense. Then in scene 4 Fabrizio emerges from the "insegna del Matto", divested of his travel garb and now dressed identically to his sister. The remainder of the act involves the central mistakes of identity: Fabrizio is taken for "Fabio" by Pasquella, and then for Lelia in disguise by the two old fathers. He is puzzled by all this, but also

mockingly detached and curious, and eventually plays along with the errors in a spirit of experimental mischief, as is made clear in his speech at the end of scene 5:

> Voglio stare a vedere che fine ha d'aver questa favola. Forse costei è serva di qualche cortigiana e credemi far stare a qualche scudo; ma gli è male informata, ch'io son quasi allievo di spagnuoli e, alla fine, vorrò piú presto uno scudo del suo che dargli un carlin del mio. Qualcun di noi sarà incòlto.[23]

> [I'm going to see how this fairy-tale is supposed to end. Perhaps she works for some fancy whore, and thinks she's going to wheedle a pile of ducats out of me. If that's so, she's got a shock coming – after my apprenticeship with the Spaniards, so to speak, I'm more likely to charge her five than pay her three. One of us is going to wind up the loser.]

At this point Fabrizio becomes a distorted mirror-image of Lelia. The actor who, in the first role, had balanced mischief with pathos, now comes down firmly on the side of cheerful trickery; the twin who has been taught things by Spanish soldiers which no unmarried girl can afford to know is replaced by a twin who hopes to imitate Spanish behaviour to his own opportunistic advantage. The audience is in no way confused between the two, because it is quite capable of distinguishing which one is on stage at any one time – indeed the whole point of this kind of comedy is that the spectators are never in error, and can thus enjoy the foolishness of the characters on stage who are *ingannati*.[24] Nevertheless, in this case, as well as developing attitudes to two separate characters, the audience cannot avoid on a different level building up a single relationship with the single performer who plays them both. The more "Fabrizio-Fabio" appears as light-hearted, mocking and

23 The expression "sarà incòlto" is glossed by modern editors as "finirà male", or "ci rimetterà".

24 This hard-headed superiority of the audience to what it derides is an essential ingredient of classical comedy. Giulio Ferroni, in three of the essays in *Il teatro e la scena* (1980), attempts a post-Romantic and Freudian analysis of the effects of twins and doubles on stage, which in my view is inappropriate to this type of text as it would have been received in its own time.

emotionally invulnerable, the easier it becomes to respond to the role of "Lelia-Fabio" as a comic trickster, rather than as a pathetic victim.

Lelia does not appear at all in act 3, though she is evoked often enough in spirit, as her father worries about her, Gherardo lusts for her, and her brother takes her place in a series of increasingly hilarious misunderstandings. It is she, so the others think, who is locked away to safety in Gherardo's house with Isabella to look after her; but the spectators know that the false male is a real male, and that in a comedy of this sort nature is bound to take its course. Indeed, this is the outcome which a comedy of this sort demands, so that the young couples can be paired off. The old men, Gherardo in particular, do not see things this way, and the dismay and dissension which they suffer as a result of their own mistake is pursued in scenes 5, 7, 8 and 9 of act 4 (after Virginio has learned from the Pedant that his son has come home, but does not yet realise that he has already met him in the street). But Fabrizio, whose return to Modena and subsequent sexual initiative are the cause of all the fuss, does not appear on stage in act 4 at all, his relationship with Isabella in particular remaining (as I have already observed) quite undeveloped. In this act, the actor playing the twins has to emerge only once from Clemenzia's house, as a disconsolate Lelia still in boy's clothes, in order to be mistaken by Gherardo for the disguised "Lelia" who he thinks ought to be with his daughter. This is at the beginning of 4.4, where Lelia seems to flee indoors again very quickly after her line "Tanto v'aiti Dio, io arei voglia di marito!" (The last thing I need now is a husband!). Most of act 4 is thus concerned with the twins and the confusion they have caused, but the words and actions are not given to the twins themselves. The two fathers take the limelight, establishing that this comedy (like most classical comedies, but unlike *Twelfth Night*) is in great measure a play about family relationships. Only in the first part of scene 8 does Flamminio briefly reappear, to remind us of the other aspect of Lelia's difficulties which had reached a crisis in act 2.

In 5.1, after the drawing up of a wildly comic battle line to assault Gherardo's house, the two old men are pacified and Fabrizio is brought on stage to be introduced to his father. From this moment on, the position of both Fabrizio and Isabella is stabilised by their

prospective marriage. Attention must now be focused on Lelia, who needs to persuade Flamminio to recognise her and return her love, and to persuade the old men to abandon her proposed match with Gherardo. However, Lelia's initiative has been crushed by Flamminio's rejection, and the persuasion has to be orchestrated by her nurse Clemenzia. The older woman stands up to Flamminio's self-righteous adolescent fury, calms him down, and tells him a tale of a faithful devoted maiden who served her lover in male disguise just to be near him. When his interest and sympathy are engaged, she reveals who the protagonist really is, so that the expected and necessary change of heart may automatically follow. Lelia emerges, in woman's clothes for the first time in the play, and Flamminio embraces her as his bride, joyfully accepting the *inganno* to which he has been subjected: "Io non credo che fusse al mondo il piú bello inganno di questo. È possibile ch'io sia stato sí cieco ch'io non l'abbi mai conosciuta?" (If this is a deception, then I can't think of a better way to be deceived. How could I be so blind that I didn't know her?).

Flamminio has indeed been deceived, more than he realises even now, and it is deceit which is responsible for his change of heart. Clemenzia, in scene 2, made a very pretty story out of the pathetic devotion of the cruelly deserted maid:

> . . . trovando che 'l suo amante amava altri e da quella tale egli era poco amato, per fargli servizio, abbandonò la casa, suo padre, e pose in pericolo l'onore; e, vestita da famiglio, s'acconciò con quel suo amante per servitore.
>
> [. . . finding that her lover was in love with a woman who cared nothing for him, then to do him service she left her house and her father, and put her honour at risk. She dressed as a page boy, and got herself hired as a servant by the man she loved.]

But she omits altogether certain facts which the audience has seen acted out on stage: the deliberately deceptive game which Lelia played between Flamminio and Isabella, the betrayal of trust which so enraged Flamminio when he heard of it. Clemenzia's version conforms strictly to the fictional pattern of the patient suffering heroine:

> E che piú? Questo suo amante, non la conoscendo, l'adoperò per mezzana tra quella sua innamorata e lui; e questa poveretta, per fargli piacere, s'arrecò a fare ogni cosa.

> [And then what happens? This lover of hers still didn't know her, and he used her as go-between to carry messages to that other woman; and that poor girl, just to give him pleasure, did exactly as she was told.]

This would be an accurate description of the fidelity of Shakespeare's Viola, but in relation to Lelia it is a downright lie. Clemenzia is continuing Lelia's own deceit, acting the *furba* on her fosterling's behalf, manipulating Flamminio's emotions by presenting the facts in a falsely attractive light. On one level, in marrying Lelia, Flamminio is doing the proper gentlemanly thing, and the sixteenth-century audience are intended to respond favourably to his determination not to behave as an *ingrato*.[25] On another level, however, he is being led by the nose, tricked by a female into unmasculine acquiescence. In the light of this, Lelia's virginal meekness in 5.3 has a certain irony about it. It is followed immediately by the couple's prudent dash for the bedroom, and then by the equivocal, teasing game which is played on the audience, between Lelia's supposed presence in one house and the emergence of the same actor, costume-changed into Fabrizio, from another. The end of Lelia's story has retained is dose of romantic pathos; but in the role of Lelia, and in the play as a whole, it may still be felt that comic trickery, carnival derision and theatrical virtuosity gain the upper hand in the end.

The derisive, festive tone has also been prevalent in some parts of the play which we have so far not mentioned at all. The comedy contains three comic 'gulls', to use the Elizabethan term, in Gherardo, Giglio and the Pedant. Gherardo is roundly mocked in 1.4 and 1.5 and in Spela's monologue in 2.5; and his behaviour in the presence of the supposed "Lelia" in 3.7 establishes him as one of the best-developed caricatures in all Italian comedy of the old man ridiculously in love. He also turns out to have been a cuckold. We learn from Pasquella's double-edged description of his late wife (3.6) that he was hopelessly

25 Clemenzia cleverly predisposes him to reject this cardinal social sin, by attributing it generally to "voi giovinacci" (you young men).

deceived about her virtue when she was alive, and he continues now to be similarly deceived about his daughter. Messer Piero the Pedant was symbolically categorised as a fool in 3.2 when he gave way to his homosexual lust. He is humiliated further for the same reason in his *contrasto* with Stragualcia in 4.1. His pedantry as such is mocked more gently, and he retains sufficient dignity to be instrumental in reconciling Virginio and Gherardo; but he deploys in the process a gushingly over-zealous manner, and an unfortunate turn of phrase which reveals more than he intended about his relationship with his pupil Fabrizio:

> Padrone, io non dico per vantarmi; ma io ho fatto per il vostro figliuolo . . . so ben io. E n'ho avuta cagione; ch'io non lo richiesi mai di cosa che subito egli non s'inchinasse a farla.[26]

> [Master, I don't want to boast unduly, but the things I've done for your son . . . well, you'd never imagine. And he's deserved it all, he's been as good as gold. Always amenable, always bending to my will.]

As for the Spanish soldier Giglio, it hardly needs demonstrating that he is only present in the play at all in order to be humiliated by Pasquella, in three scenes which can easily be excised from the play (as translators have since realised) without any effect on the other parts of the plot. All these three are alienated from the audience enough to serve as partially dehumanised comic targets, but in no case is the humour really savage (compared, for example, with comedies by Aretino or with Bruno's *Candelaio*). Only the Spaniard, the foreign occupier, is actually seen to admit defeat. Messer Piero has no goals or aspirations of which he can be disappointed, and Gherardo does not appear in act 5 to be told finally that he cannot marry Lelia.

Altogether the comedy contains a considerable range of foolishness which is exposed and derided by other fools, or at least by characters who themselves are something less than estimable. There is even a small dose of sharper satire, in the references made

26 For the same equivocal use of *inchinare* to imply sodomitic compliance, compare Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, 43.139: "che fe' inchinando al suo voler malvagio". I have diverged from Cerreta in punctuating this speech.

to the misbehaviour of nuns. But a great deal of the play's scurrility is there to be openly savoured by the audience rather than to be disapproved, and most of the mockery is good-humoured in the end. It is Carnival time; so if the Fool of Frulla's inn-sign seems to preside over the proceedings, he does so under the special temporary licence given to a Lord of Misrule. Rather than pelting him out of the city as a scapegoat, the spectators may even feel momentarily tempted to put on their own cap and bells and join his company, as Stragualcia suggests in his closing speech:

> Se volete venire a cena con esso noi, v'aspetto al 'Matto'. E portate denari, perché non v'è chi espedisca *gratis*. Ma, se non volete venire (che mi par di no), restativi a godere. E voi Intronati, fate segno d'allegrezza'.
>
> [If you want to join us at the wedding supper, then I'll see you all at the Fool's Cap. But bring some cash with you, because you'll have to pay for yourselves. But if you aren't coming – and you don't look as if you are – then stay here and have a good time. Members of the Academy: your appreciation, please!]

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In a recent absorbing and highly readable book, Nicholas Greene argues that comedies tend to set up a 'contract' with their audiences, a set of attitudes and premises to be accepted for the purpose of the play, variable from one comedy to the next (1980). Thus an audience on one evening may be persuaded to laugh on the premise that natural sexual insitincts take precedence over formal social restraints (as in *Calandra*, *L'École des femmes*, and perhaps *Gl'ingannati*), whereas the next night the same audience may be asked to disapprove of seducers and relish their discomfiture (as in *Clizia, Volpone, Tartuffe*).

> In laughing we share a point of view, an angle of vision on the object of our laughter; but it is not always the same point of view, it is very frequently not the way we look on the subject outside the theatre. The comedian may use any number of distorting lenses to alter our vision. For the duration of the comedy, however, we are prepared to accept the reality of the comically distorted images,

> whether the extraordinary shapes of the fantastic, the caricatures of the ridiculous, or the bifocal forms of the absurd. (214)

This present examination of *Gl'ingannati* reminds us that the variety of dramatic 'contracts' (and the variety of distorting lenses) extends to modes of presentation as well as to attitudes and ideologies – to form as well as to content, if this ancient distinction may still be allowed some meaning. A play may contract to speak to us by presenting a world of present time, of past time, or of no time at all. It may communicate through the language of observable human reality, of cause and effect, or through a symbolic language of the mind. In particular, it may distance its fictional time and space entirely from the audience which watches it, or it may choose to hint at, or openly acknowledge, the presence of that audience and its own nature as an artefact. It may or may not incorporate into its language and action a recognition of the occasion on which it is being performed. Audiences can usually adapt to any of these alternatives without explanations or justifications, unless their culture has been strongly prejudiced against one of them by dogma or by unbrokenly entrenched habit. In Italy in the 1530s, comic dramatists with a humanist training were establishing a new dogma, the strict fictional autonomy of the *fabula* (as though it were a piece of history or a *novella* acted out on stage), to replace the habitual mode of occasional drama (both religious and secular) which conducted either a harangue or a dialogue with its audience for didactic, celebratory or entertainment purposes.

The first two acts of *Gl'ingannati* are cast firmly in the new classical mould. The events represented spring from a constistent *antefatto*, narrated in the first three scenes, which establishes a naturalistic time sequence to the story. In addition, considerable efforts are made to set the action plausibly in the 'here and now' of contemporary Italy after the Sack of Rome, thus developing much further the kind of local colour already found in Machiavelli's *Mandragola* and in the later comedies of Ariosto. The audience is invited to relate to the characters with the conventional suspension of disbelief which belongs to non-symbolic fiction. This contract is one of self-contained realism, by the standards of its age: the reference to Carnival time in 2.6, although probably linking with

the occasion of the performance, can nevertheless also appear simply as an extreme example of the immediacy of the setting. With the first scene of act 3 the 'realism' contract is torn up. The audience has to adjust to the sudden appearance of "Lelia" as her own twin brother, and this involves accepting the overt theatricality of the spectacle – it is no longer possible to immerse oneself uncritically in the fictitious world of the plot. This sense of self-consciousness is then acccentuated in 3.2 by a symbolic game which contains open appeals to the knowledge and prejudices of the Intronati and their guests, and which thus constantly echoes familiar forms of private spectacle in courts or clubs, as opposed to the stricter dramatic modes of Roman comedy. Thereafter, the spectator's involvement in the story may perhaps be less intense, but (s)he has an enhanced sense of a social occasion which (s)he shares with the actors on stage as well as with the rest of the audience. Theatre in sixteenth-century Italy, at least before the rise of the professional companies, was essentially a private activity, even though in most cases the expression of this fact was entrusted to prologues and interludes rather than to the text of the play itself.

It could be, of course, that this contractual inconsistency in *Gl'ingannati*, this sudden switch of representational mode, is a symptom of the comedy's multiple authorship, an uneasy superimposition of several separate dramatic visions. If this is so, then the authors, once they decided to effect the merger, seem to have taken advantage of the situation by springing a deliberate dramatic surprise: after leading their audience to believe that they are watching one kind of spectacle, they abruptly and even hilariously alter the rules of the game. The opening of act 3 thus constitutes a *coup de théâtre*, almost a dénouement half-way through the play, in the sense that the tensions previously aroused by Lelia's predicament are unexpectedly defused. It is now impossible to discover whether this unusual structure was intended all along, or whether it was a way of reconciling in a hurry contributions to the play which were not mutually compatible. In any case, it is largely irrelevant to a judgement of the play as it now stands. By luck or by judgement, the authors produced one of the most popular comedies of their century. Professional performers, from the 1540s onwards, understood how its episodes could be cast and staged, and built it

rapidly into their repertoire of scenarios, using it as a model for other plots in which similar tricks could be played. These tricks, like most of the *arte* repertoire, soon became a matter of routine, standard frameworks of performance to which only a brillian team of performers would manage to bring any freshness. But *Gl'ingannati* continued to be attractive as a full text in its own right, because it contained other qualities which would survive its first presentation to the Accademia degli Intronati. Most of all, the verve and fluency of its comic dialogue, although lacking the firm authorial stamp of a Machiavelli or an Aretino, has a colloquial sureness of touch which circumvents literary models while remaining accessible and unprovincial throughout.

These qualities are worth testing on a modern stage, since assessments of the effectiveness of dramatic dialogue remain mere guesswork until a team of actors has tried out that dialogue on a live audience. The present essay has attempted to identify some central practical aspects of staging and casting, which seem inescapably contained in the text once it is read as a manual for performance, and which one would hope to see incorporated into modern revivals of the comedy.[27]

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27 After the publication of this essay in 1982, there were two stagings by Leeds University Workshop Theatre of the Andrews translation of *Gl'ingannati* (now published online, see footnote no. 1). A small-scale production was mounted in Leeds in 1987; and the play was re-staged, with more substantial funding, for Siena University in 1991.

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2

Rhetoric and Drama: Monologues and Set Speeches in Aretino's Comedies

In 2.17 of Aretino's *Talanta*, the character Pizio, *compagno* to young lover Orfinio and his faithful if reluctant go-between, has to report back after an errand to the courtesan Talanta.[1] Orfinio, we know, should be on tenterhooks to learn the outcome of this mission; and, although it is doubtful whether an audience will feel any great concern for him, at this point in act 2 he still seems to rank as the play's protagonist. He was the first character to be presented after Talanta herself; and the ups and downs of his emotions, however sternly filtered through Pizio's appeals to morality and common sense, have been the foremost thread of the plot so far. So in the simple dramatic sense of "What is to happen next?", the audience will see Pizio's report and Orfinio's reaction to it as the next claim on their interest.

The formats of Italian comedy, as developed up to 1542, will have prepared them in particular for two ways of handling the encounter. On the one hand, there could be a semi-serious scene in which Pizio reports unfavourably on Talanta's behaviour, tries again to dissuade Orfinio from loving her, and listens to Orfinio's emotional reactions (as, for example, in 2.1 and 2.7 of *Gl'ingannati* by the Intronati Academy, the scenes between Flamminio and the disguised Lelia). Alternatively, Pizio could tease Orfinio by delaying his report on a series of trivial pretexts, thus building up comic tension by means of a simple frustration gag, well nigh infallible in

1 All references to Aretino's comedies are taken from the edition of Giorgio Petrocchi (1971). The first version of the *Cortigiana* (654-753) will be quoted as *Cortigiana* (1525) and the second version (94-217) as *Cortigiana* (1534). It is assumed that act and scene references are sufficient, without page indications, in further footnotes.

performance, such as can be traced from Plautus through to Calmo and the *commedia dell'arte.*

Pizio does in fact delay his report, but in a quite different way and with (as far as one can judge) no comic intention. Throughout the play so far he has been lecturing Orfinio on the destructive effects of entanglement with a whore (1.12; 1.13; 2.3), and reiterating his views in monologue even without Orfinio to listen (2.4). Now, by contrast, he wants to muse privately on the delights of being respectably in love with a woman who deserves it. Orfinio's arrival in 2.17 threatens to disturb his soliloquy, so he simply sends Orfinio away until the speech is finished: "Date due voltarelle per di quinci via, fin che io conferisco alcune cosettine a me stesso" ("Just take a couple of turns away from here, until I've sorted out some things in my mind"). Orfinio accepts this quite amiably —"peroché anch'io fernetico meco proprio" ("because I'm rambling to myself as well") — and wanders off (presumably) to the opposite end of the broad, shallow Renaissance stage, where he is conveniently out of earshot until Pizio calls him back. Pizio's speech on the pleasures of "amare una donna da ben" ("loving a virtuous woman") consists mainly of attempts to evoke particular intense moments of the experience, sublime flashes of distant communication when the lady is on her balcony or attending church – "mi sento ricrear da lo sguardo di lei, come si ricreano l'erbe riarse dal sole per le gocciole della pioggia" (2.18; "I feel renewed by her gaze, just as blades of grass burnt by the sun are refreshed by raindrops"). That first person "mi sento ricrear" emphasises the speech's apparent status as deep personal reflection; and in scene 19, having called Orfinio to join him, Pizio elaborates on the idea that, if he wants to have a sensible conversation, then his only possible companion is himself:

> subito che il gricciolo del confabulare mi cade in fantasia, mi accompagno con Pizio, uomo capace ad intendere quanto comporta lo istinto de la natura, agiunto con due cuius che egli ha, e cosí discorrendo de agibilibus, nego e confermo, secondo che la materia mi persuade a confermare a a negare.
>
> [as soon as I feel a desire for conversation, I keep company with Pizio, a man who has an understanding of nature's instinct, along with such learning as he possesses; and so debating on what to do, I

> deny and I confirm according to what the facts persuade me should be confirmed and denied.]

Only then does he move to a version of the first alternative dialogue which I outlined above: an account of the calculated perfidy with which Talanta received her gifts, the implications of which Orfinio stubbornly refuses to accept. The dramatic action of the comedy has been interrupted quite openly and explicitly to make room for a monologue.

The insistence that in scene 18 Pizio was talking to no one but himself might strike the spectators as odd, because they will have felt that he was talking to them. Aretino's *Talanta*, in these first two acts at least, has been pursuing in openly didactic fashion the theme of "la ingordigia e la malvagità de le cortigiane" (1.12; "the greed and criminality of prostitutes"). Didacticism in the theatre involves directing remarks, implicitly or explicitly, to the audience. The character Talanta has demonstrated in word and deed her single-mindedness in organising sexuality for profit. But the lesson has been conveyed much less by example than by verbal rhetoric, commentaries and descriptions, in which the character Pizio has played more part than any other. He and Orfinio between them have developed the theme in a mixture of solo and duet. Pizio in particular has soliloquised on the subject in 2.4; and his long tirade to Orfinio in 1.12 is a set speech which has the feel of a monologue or a public address, with a formal construction and a wealth of generalised detail which go beyond the fictional dramatic purpose of persuading Orfinio, as an individual, of his error. After all this, the monologue of 2.18, for which space is so deliberately cleared, will be felt as one more component of the play's direct message. To insist so emphatically that it was just a private conversation between Pizio and Pizio only draws attention to a perennial theatrical question: when a character pronounces a soliloquy, or a set speech which seems detachable from its dramatic context, who is really talking to whom?

The present essay consists of some reflections on this question as it applies to some of Aretino's comedies. It relates to the 'Languages

of Italian Literature'[2] in the sense that the purpose and context of a discourse, and the identification of overt and implied speakers and listeners, are questions which ultimately regard the deployment of language. In establishing the allusive messages about himself which Aretino wanted to communicate, scholars have decoded without difficulty (as Aretino would no doubt have hoped they would) their author's manipulations of conventional dramatic dialogue. In doing so they have passed over the fact that those manipulations themselves, a dramatic methodology which on occasion may seem to bring the 'drama' to a grinding halt, are unusual for the theatre of the time precisely in their implications as to who is addressing whom. Such linguistic (or socio-linguistic) patterns affect in their turn our assessment of the dramatic (or socio-dramatic) atmosphere which the texts of Aretino's comedies aim to create.

In this brief approach to the subject, it is convenient to pose the two halves of the question separately: firstly, who is being addressed? and, secondly, who seems ultimately to be speaking?

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One of the chief innovations of the new humanist *commedia erudita* was that it aimed to detach its text, or at least its *fabula*, from any specific audience or occasion. Greek and Roman dramatic models were seen as self-contained timeless works of performed fiction: the ways in which they did in fact mesh with particular performing contexts were not so readily perceived around 1500 as they are now. The plot of a humanist Renaissance play, compared with those of most medieval drama, tries to create its own autonomous fictional space and operate inside it without self-consciousness, 'overheard' by the audience as if by accident, rather than played straight at the spectators so as to include them in the action. One aspect of this tendency was a reluctance, at least among purists, to have characters address the audience directly. The connection between the timeless drama and its immediate occasion of performance could only legitimately be made in a prologue, or in the closing words of the *plaudite* at the end. This principle was based much

2 This is the title of the *festschrift* in which the essay appeared.

more on classical example than on written classical precept; but one passage in the Donatus commentaries on Terence was there for the quoting,[3] and it was used when the matter was discussed in the *Giudizio sopra la tragedia di Canace e Macareo* (Judgement on the tragedy of Canace and Macareo) now attributed to Giraldi Cinzio.[4]

This insistence on the enclosed autonomy of the fiction, what we now call the 'fourth wall' of the stage, was fully in tune with the trends of the new drama, but it ran into trouble none the less. Classical-style plays were usually given to private coterie audiences, to courtiers long accustomed to 'occasional' entertainments which acknowledged their presence as spectators, flattered the patron of the feast, and made direct reference to the event being celebrated. The compromise usually reached was to exclude such elements from the five acts of the play and concentrate them in the *intermezzi*, but this segregation was often not fully maintained. The principle was undermined even more in comic plays (which were the majority) by the fact that a soliloquy intended to make people laugh is irresistibly pulled by the dynamic of performance into becoming a direct address, whether this fact is openly admitted or not. A comic monologue, as Plautus constantly shows (earning the disapproval of Donatus), usually resolves itself into a chat with the audience, or a teasing provocation, or a sharing of knowledge behind the backs of other characters. The intention of arousing laughter automatically

3 Wessner 1902-1908 (reprinted 1966), 20: "nihil ad populum facit actorem vel extra comoediam loqui, quod vitium Plauti frequentissimum" ("he [Terence] makes the actor say nothing [directly] to the audience, or outside the play, a fault which is frequent in Plautus").

4 *The Giudizio* previously credited to Bartolomeo Cavalcanti now appears reattributed in Speroni 1982. The issue is succinctly expressed as follows on 113: "gli Istrioni deono rappresentare le cose come veramente le fariano tra sé le persone che essi fingono, e non dare a vedere che siano cose che solo si narrino, o che si fingano" (the actors should represent things as the people they are impersonating would do them in reality, and not indicate that they are things which are only narrated or feigned). Giraldi expressed a similar view in his *Discorso intorno al comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie*. Giraldi 1973, 220: "tale dee introdurre l'azione della favola il poeta, che non abbia mai bisogno l'istrione di voltare il suo ragionare a gli spettatori" ("the poet should introduce the action of the story in such a way that the actor never needs to direct his words to the spectators").

assumes the presence of a second party who is supposed to laugh, and therefore of an interlocutor, however silent. This fact, combined with the long tradition of audience participation in court theatre, put the prohibition of direct address in comedy under continual pressure. It is significant that, if the rule explicitly existed by the 1530s, one of the decade's most successful comedies, *Gli ingannati*, ends up by breaking it rather spectacularly and for both the main reasons I have just outlined.[5]

Aretino's practice shows a very early awareness of, and response to, the notional rule against direct address. It also focuses the methodological problem for the analyst who reads these texts after the event. How does one decide whether a speech involves direct address or not? The question can be answered on two levels. The presence of a clear grammatical allusion to some or all of the spectators, an unequivocal *voi* form when only one character is on stage, would seem to leave the matter beyond dispute. But there are other forms of speech which seem to carry what might be called an implied *voi*, forms which are open to subjective interpretation; and the matter is further complicted by the tendency, already described, for a comic monologue to turn into a conversation or a harangue.

The only cases of grammatical direct address in Aretino, outside prologue and *plaudite*, occur in the unpublished 1525 version of the *Cortigiana*, and they can be listed quickly. In 4.5 the character Rosso ends a very brief solo remark with a direct appeal: "Ma che dite, signore?" ("But what do you say, ladies?"). Grillo's soliloquy in 4.13 maintains this for longer, with "Lasciatemi favellare, ve ne prego . . . Ma s'io vi volessi contare . . . Ma state voi a vedere. . ." ("Let me talk, please . . . But if I wanted to tell you the story . . . But see for yourselves . . ."), backed up by one of those formulae in which it is hard not to detect an implied interlocutor: "Mi era scordato: mastro Andrea ha un specchio concavo . . ." ("But I forgot: Mastro Andrea has got a concave mirror . . ."). One does not say, "Oh, I forgot . . ." to oneself; and in any case this whole speech has the "messenger" function of

5 In 4.5 Pasquella addresses herself explicitly to the ladies in the audience and not the men. I have argued elsewhere that the whole of 3.2 is an allusive discussion of political and municipal prejudice, with a direct reference to a member of the audience. See Andews 1982, essay no. 1 in the present volume.

telling the audience things which they will not see for themselves. Rosso again, in 4.14, addresses the audience clearly: "e sappiate che . . ." ("and you should know that . . ."). All three of these speeches create a confidential mood between the audience and a single character. All three of them have the grammatical *voi* expurgated from the published second version of the *Cortigiana* which appears in successive editions from 1534. Similarly removed is the phrase "Ma, per tornare al proposito . . ." ("But to get back to the subject . . ."), in an equally chatty monologue by Aloigia which is 3.17 in 1525 and 3.13 in 1534. This suggests that by the time he came to publish the play, Aretino had consciously decided to observe the prohibition against grammatical direct address. It also shows his realisation, which we must continue to share, that certain forms of speech do in fact contain an implied *voi* and are likely to be experienced as direct address, even if they would escape the censoring hand of a purist whose criteria were merely grammatical.

In the rewritten versions of some scenes in *Cortigiana* (1534), Aretino interestingly pulls his characters away from second-person address to the audience by means of an alternative second-person address to other characters within the play. In 4.5 Rosso's original "Ma che dite, signore?" becomes "Son qui, signor" ("I'm here, sir"), and the rascally servant leaves stage not of his own volition but to answer a call from his master. In Grillo's messenger speech of 4.13 there is no direct substitution of phrases, but the monologue ends with the arrival of Rosso, and this is acknowledged with "Addio, Rosso, non m'era accorto di te" ("Hi, Rosso, I hadn't noticed you"). In the following scene Rosso's confidential approach to the audience is mitigated not only by the omission of "e sappiate che . . .", but by a new rhetorical (but real, grammatical) *voi* addressed to the corrupt stewards who are his main object of satirical comment: "O ghiottoni, o asinoni, che cosa crudele è il fatto vostro!" ("You rascals, you asses, you've really found a sharp trick there!"). It may be a moot point whether these *maggiordomi* exist mainly in Rosso's fictional world or in the audience's real one; but in general one can detect a deliberate attempt to reinforce the connections between the soliloquiser and the self-contained drama, and weaken the direct link with the audience.

The question of direct grammatical address does not recur in Aretino after the first *Cortigiana*, but an implied direct address

continues to haunt the monologues of his comedies as it haunts so many other plays of the period. His dramas are full of themes and theses – the debate on marriage in the *Marescalco*, proper and improper love in the *Talanta*, satire against courts and courtiers in practically all the comedies – and the more topical and precise literary and personal allusions which are now being discovered are even more complex than was once supposed.[6] It is tautologous, and not very significant, to say that these messages are addressed to an audience, but in the specific case of monologues there remain problems worthy of attention, some of them relating to linguistic formulae. In *Il Marescalco*'s 3.8, the courtier Ambrogio addresses the audience (it would seem) on various idiocies of the courtly scene. There is no grammatical *voi* in his speech, but he manages to deploy a third-person structure in such a manner that we are surely invited to decode *he* and *they* as an implied *you*. "Chi non scappa ne le corti . . ." ("People who don't take refuge in courts . . .") is a direct invitation (sarcastic, of course, to be rejected rather than accepted) to the listeners who in practice were likely to be irrevocably planted "ne le corti" already. The subjunctive "Mandinsi pure i suoi figliuoli in corte . . ." ("Let them send their sons to court . . .") is a barely veiled "Mandate pure i vostri figliuoli . . ." ("Go on, send your sons . . ."), a rhetorical trick of the law court or the debating chamber in which certain courteous restraints are thinly observed but where everyone knows that is really meant. More complicated, but equally related to rhetorical modes, is the Ipocrito's self-presentation in 1.2 of his eponymous play. By comparing hypocrites like himself to traditional parasites,the character suggests that he is more subtle and more dangerous than they are, but the surface statements of the harangue are an ironical invitation to the public to reject the parasite and accept the hypocrite: "Dico che bisogna serrargli l'uscio, accarezzando un mio pari . . ." ("I say one has to shut the door on them, and welcome someone like me instead . . ."). The impersonal "bisogna . . ." here involves an implied *voi*. Perhaps there is an alternative invitation to some of the public to take up the hypocrite's own trade: "Chi non sa fingere non sa vivere . . . chi non si mostra amico de i vizii diventa nimico degli uomini"

6 This topic was investigated at length by Cairns 1985.

("anyone who can't dissemble, can't live . . . anyone who is not a friend to vice is an enemy to man"), with the "chi non . . ." formula operating as in Ambrogio's speech in the *Marescalco*. Throughout the soliloquy there is an air of provocative collusion which is surely an implied *voi*; and at the end, hearing someone coming, the Ipocrito hastily detaches himself from the audience, and from his mood of confessional frankness, in order to assume his public mask: "Ma che sento io? *neque in ira tua corripias me* . . ." ("But who's that coming?" followed quickly by some liturgical Latin).

There are two broad categories of monologue or set speech, of which Aretino (I think) makes even more use than his contemporary dramatists, and which lean heavily towards an implied *voi* whether or not they contain such identifiable linguistic or rhetorical markers. Both derive from precedents in classical theatre, but both are distorted by Aretino towards a greater sense of collusion with the spectators. One of them is the messenger speech, in which events off-stage are recounted for the audience's information. The classical practice was to make this a set speech with a formal structure, delivered to other characters on stage who also need to be informed. Aretino tends to make his messenger speeches into direct monologues, sometimes rather thinly disguised as personal reflection or emotional outburst. In *Cortigiana* (1534), the Pescatore (Fishmonger) tells us of the outrages he suffered as a result of Rosso's practical joke (1.23; the equivalent 1.21 in 1525 was not a monologue); Grillo in the same play recounts indignities suffered by Maco (4.13 already mentioned); the Pedant in Il *Marescalco* tells us that the Duke of Mantua has received him graciously and given him the job of writing a speech (3.10); in *La Talanta* Marmilia and Stellina chat to themselves in order to ensure that the spectators are properly informed about the plot (3.2 and 3.4), and Stellina follows up again in 3.8; in the same play Fora informs us that lovers have been reunited (first speech of 4.1 before the entry of Costa); in *L'Ipocrito* Prelio has to explain to the audience, as he surely does not need to explain to himself, why he has had to change his clothes (2.17).

This sort of speech overlaps with another, in which the audience is informed of what has happened already by hearing what a particular character is thinking and planning to do next. One is tempted to call this form of soliloquy just 'Plautine', since it

derives from the dozens of speeches in Plautus's comedies where a wily slave assesses a problem, accepts a challenge, or plans the next trick – usually with a volley of accompanying jokes, and very frequently with some extended military metaphor which reinforces the essence of Plautine comedy as a playful formalised combat on stage between characters already marked out by convention as winners and losers.[7] This is the classic (in every sense) intrusion of the stand-up comic into the fictional dramatic plot; and it cannot work, as we have already argued, without the implied presence of an audience as interlocutor. Versions of it are common throughout Italian Renaissance comedy. To prove statistically that it is even more common in Aretino would take more space than we possess – how many plays not by Aretino would we have to offer in comparison, in order to provide an acceptable sample? However, anyone reading through Aretino's texts with this point in mind will be struck by the incessant appearances and variants, brief and extended, of this 'Plautine' soliloquy mode. It is assigned most often, of course, to characters who plot, play tricks, or try to take any kind of initiative in solving their own problems.

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The speeches in *Cortigiana* (1525) in which we found an overt grammatical *voi* tend to have roots in one or other of these two categories. Grillo's monologue in 4.13 is indisputably a messenger speech, and the others relate strongly to the Plautine soliloquy. One characteristic of both sorts of discourse is that an audience is happy to accept, for the purpose of this fiction, that the person speaking is none other than the character standing before them: Aloigia, Rosso, or Grillo in these cases. There is no need to imagine the author of the play as the 'real' speaker, or to relate the statements of the speech to the spectators' own real world. Aliogia's history and problems are hers, not ours; Rosso's plotting will only affect other characters in the play; the torments recounted by Grillo are happening to Maco on stage (or rather just off stage), and will

7 As just two examples out of many, see *Miles gloriosus*, 259-71, and *Pseudolus*, 575-94

never spill over into the world of the auditorium. In that sense speeches like this are properly 'dramatic' soliloquies: we know ultimately that they were composed by an author, as was the whole play, but we tend all the same to dismiss this fact from our minds and concentrate on the suspension of disbelief.

That at least is what ought to be the case, on past precedent. It would be a true analysis of a messenger speech in a Greek tragedy, or of the scurrilous information offered to the audience by Pasquella in *Gli ingannati*'s 4.5 (see n5, above); it would be true of a conspiratorial monologue by Pseudolus or by Renaissance equivalents such as Fessenio in act 3 of Bibbiena's *Calandra*. The picture becomes more complex, however, as soon as there are placed in the speech some generalised comments about social or moral behaviour which are clearly to be interpreted as applying to the real world off stage. This is what happens in the speeches of Aloigia and Rosso, especially in their rewritten versions of 1534, and it is a major feature of all Aretino's comic writing. The moment an audience is faced with satirical remarks about courtiers and their lords in general, rather than the individual foolishness of the invented Maco and Parabolano – the moment we have verbally paraded before us the shortcomings of courtesans or pedants or *maggiordomi* or servants or hypocrites – then we know that a message is being conveyed about our own world, and we also readjust our notion of who is actually speaking. The words of the stage character become the words of the author; or at least we have to make judgements about whether this is true or not, whether the views of a characters about our world are offered for criticism, ironic rejection, condemnation, or approval. In any of these cases an authorial figure looms somewhere behind the words spoken on stage, however complex the relationship may be between the author's implied message and the surface meaning of the words. This issue is much more obviously present in the case of a soliloquy, or in any extended speech which stands apart from the dramatic action. In performance the point can be emphasised even more – there are some passages which seem to demand that the actor should turn away from exclusively addressing other actors, and indicate somehow that the words are uttered to the world at large.

The principles indicated here hardly constitute a new thesis on drama: on the contrary they are extremely banal, and apply to most

forms of theatre sooner or later. In the Italian Renaissance they were established very promptly as an integral part of the game by the first creator of new humanist dramatic texts, Ariosto, whose comedies all contain a modest dose of satirical comment. Topical remarks involving an authorial point of view can be found in all the new-style comedies produced or published between Ariosto's *Cassaria* (performed 1508, published c.1510) and Aretino's own entry into the field (first performance of *La Cortigiana* in 1525, first publication of *Il Marescalco* in 1533). In all of them, including those of Aretino, satire and morality may be exemplified in the behaviour of the characters on stage, or expressed in short *sententiae* spoken by one character to another, or in insults and quarrels between characters, as well as being incorporated in monologues and set speeches. This mixture of techniques, especially if the main emphasis is on the performed story and on what characters convey by their words and deeds to each other, helps to make the authorial presence relatively unintrusive. In Aretino by contrast, and perhaps particularly in his earlier comedies (*Cortigiana, Marescalco, Talanta*), I think this presence is deliberately made more intrusive, in the sense that themes running through the author's mind dominate and control the play to a greater extent that seemed permissible to Ariosto, Machiavelli, Bibbiena, and the Intronati Academy. What is more, this effect is achieved to a considerable degree by the relatively high number of occasions in which a monologue, a set speech, or even a dialogue is made to stand aside from the fictional action, as it were in quotation marks, so that the audience is aware of a direct communication from the author.

I have already outlined one example of this at the start of the present essay: the way in which the 'courtesan problem' is pursued throughout the first three acts of *La Talanta*, much more by rhetorical diatribe than by the action of the plot. In both versions of *La Cortigiana*, though in a more diffuse way, the theme is satire on the Roman court in all its aspects and at all social levels, and again a good proportion of its treatment takes the form of comments in monologues or set speeches. Without these comments, indeed, it would be hard to believe that there was any real satirical intention at all, since the two plots revolving around Maco and Parabolano respectively are so grotesque and fantastical as to be removed from any notion of social realism. If we come away none the less

with a feeling that these wild imaginings constitute a comment on contemporary reality, it is only because we are told so verbally over and over again by characters such as Mastro Andrea, Rosso, Valerio and his colleagues, and eventually Parabolano himself. The action of the play is (to use a modern analogy) animated cartoon farce, given significance by what amounts to a running commentary of *pasquinate* spoken in prose. It would be possible to demonstrate that there is a measurable increase in this implied authorial presence, as well as an increase in monologues as such, in the printed 1534 *Cortigiana* as compared with the 1525 manuscript. Once the play was detached from the immediacy of first performance in Rome (and once the text was offered for reading rather than performing?), then the rhetorical elements had to be reinforced even further, and implicit messages made more verbally explicit. It is perhaps in *Cortigiana* (1534), of all Aretino's plays, that the authorial voice is most unceasingly present, underlining and directing the themes of the play with a nervous insistence that might betray his doubt as to whether the stage action is enough to convey the messages.

Il Marescalco then becomes an interesting variant in terms of technique. Here the rhetorical exercise which runs through the play is a formal debate on the pros and cons of marriage, while court satire, though by no means absent, takes second place. Harangues on marriage, on both sides of the debate, do not need to be addressed to the audience, because the simple plot makes it necessary to address them all to the unfortunate Marescalco himself, who thinks he is going to be forced into marriage by his lord's misplaced generosity. As a result there is, if anything, even more structured persuasive rhetoric in *Il Marescalco* than in *La Talanta*, but rarely in the form of monologue: the set speeches have a plausible role within the autonomous fiction, and the protagonist himself can act as audience. (There are only eleven monologues of any kind, long or short, authorial or not, in *Il Marescalco*. In each of the other comedies the figure is thirty or more, except for *Il Filosofo* where it comes back down to fifteen.)

So far, when evoking an implied speaker standing behind a character on stage, I have referred rather carefully to 'the author' rather than to 'Pietro Aretino'. This is because in the cases examined, as in the vast majority of plays which project an authorial

personality or thesis, the effect does not depend on whether we can put a name and a historical reality to the composer of the script. The themes and problems raised are going to be just as clear to an audience watching plays known to be by Aretino as they are in a medieval mystery play where the authorship is anonymous. What we have been dealing with is called 'the implied author' in modern analyses of fiction[8] – a self-consistent figure whom we create from the text itself, but whom we might not recognise at all in the real historical author if we met him or her socially.

I have argued that the presence of an implied author speaking through a play script is not unusual in Italian Renaissance comedy, but that Aretino gives such a presence more emphasis than average. What is entirely unique, as compared with other plays earlier than 1540 (leaving aside prologue and *plaudite*, which by classical precedent have a special status) is the voice of the real historical author speaking identifiably through his text or evoked by it. And yet scholars have long assumed that Pietro Aretino himself, as well as the more anonymous implied author, has a tendency to thrust himself on his audience's attention and hover as a not very ghostly presence within the dialogues and diatribes of his characters. This assumption is made not only by new exploratory studies like that of Christoper Cairns (see n6, above), but also in standard footnotes by the plays' editors, and there seems no reason to think that those scholars are wrong. As with the case of direct address to the audience, the grammatical patterns vary from the overt to the implied.

There are a few cases in the comedies where a first-person statement by a character, in the middle of a more extended discussion, has been read by commentators in such a way that the *io* involved is Aretino himself. In 3.3 of *Cortigiana* (1525), the courtier Flamminio is disgusted with Rome and says, "Anderò a Mantoa . . ." ("I shall go to Mantua . . .") at a time when Mantua was about to be Aretino's next port of call. Three more passages are regularly decoded as underlining Pietro's contacts with great men. These include "Stupii udendo quello che ne contò ieri Iacopo Eterno . . ." (2.11; "I was amazed when I heard what Iacopo Eterno

8 The concept was coined by W.C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), and developed more systematically in Chatman (1978, 151).

had to say about it . . ."), spoken by Mastro Andrea in *Cortigiana* (1534); the first-person reference to a meeting with the painter Raphael spoken by Blando in *Talanta*'s 4.21; and Valerio's "Io conobbi sua Magnificenzia [Gasparo Contarini] in Bologna . . ." (3.7; "I got to know his Excellency in Bologna . . ."), in *Cortigiana* (1534), which has been used as biographical evidence about Aretino (Cairns 1985, 15-17). Here, if traditional readings are correct, we have brief flashes of the real author of the play speaking in the first person; and everything we know about Pietro's penchant for self-advertisement suggests that he would intend his audience to be aware of the fact. Elsewhere he refers to himself in the third person, twice by name – *Cortigiana* (1525)'s 5.16; *Marescalco*'s 3.6 –, and once as "Flagello dei Principi" (2.11; "Scourge of Princes") in *Cortigiana* (1534). But much more extensive, even if less linguistically transparent, are the long strings of references to close contemporaries which lay down a network of friendships, patronage, and lustre by association, as well as of enmity and disapproval. Though nothing is said overtly, it is accepted that in the middle of this web we are intended to deduce the presence of a real figure who claims prestige and influence, and we are supposed to know that his name is Pietro Aretino. In two scenes in particular, considerable time is given over to this exercise, under the thinnest of dramatic pretexts. In 3.7 of *Cortigiana* (1534), Valerio and Flamminio pass in review all the personalities in contemporary public life with whom their author wants to be linked at that time, concentrating on the Venetian circle which he was just beginning to cultivate. In *Marescalco*'s 5.3, a similar list is compiled, under the guise of finding models of virtue and talent for the Marescalco's hypothetical offspring to emulate. The fact that the set speeches stand apart from the dramatic action is in this second instance emphasised by the Marescalco himself, who sarcastically takes on the role of spectator to a play within his play. The implications of scenes like these are now familiar to all students of the plays: in the present context it just needs emphasising how unusual for the theatre of the period is this real authorial presence. For its equivalent in cheeky self-publicity one would perhaps have to wait until a night in Paris in 1784, when the character Figaro stepped to the footlights and the audience

soon realised they were listening to a personal apologia from the author Beaumarchais (*Le Mariage de Figaro*, 5.3).

Like those Paris spectators, Aretino's audience would need to be well enough informed to get the point. If *Marescalco*'s 5.3 was really intended to "project his image through the reflected glory of a list of illustrious contemporaries" (Cairns 1985, 38), then Pietro had to be sure that the public would know exactly who was speaking to them, and be sure also that they knew his personality, tastes, and ambitions. That he could in fact rely on this is yet another reminder of how Italian court theatre of this period differed from public theatre. A group of spectators who all knew one another was being addressed, allusively but without ambiguity, by an identifiable author whom they all knew. This relationship, this discourse which was essentially rhetorical rather than dramatic, seems often to be more important than the spectacle provided by the fictional story. In a coterie theatre the real world of the author and performers and audience, the immediate social interaction between them, can sometimes be the action that really matters, and to which the stage *fabula* takes second place.

If this is true, it becomes less surprising that in *La Talanta*, act 2, Pizio should send Orfinio away until he has finished delivering his polished lyrical discourse on respectable love. Such a procedure may interrupt the 'drama', if we take that word in its etymological sense of stage 'action', but it in no way interrupts the performance. Rhetoric and lyric are performed arts too, and Italian court audiences of the sixteenth century got as much pleasure from being addressed by a single performer, or from striking a relationship with that performer and with the author who could often be discerned behind him, as they did out of 'overhearing' a drama in the new classical mode. It is a commonplace to say that Renaissance rhetoric made a large contribution to Renaissance dramaturgy: perhaps we should consider whether on some occasions a dramatic spectacle was really a disguised form of rhetoric.[9]

9 As this article went to press, I noted some parallel observations on private theatre, and on the invasion of monologue into drama, in Weinapple 1986, 69-85 (especially 80-5).

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3

Written Texts and Performed Texts in Italian Renaissance Comedy

It is common knowledge that one of the earliest *commedie erudite*, the *Calandra*[1] of Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, was first performed to honour Francesco Maria Della Rovere, at Urbino, in 1513 under the direction of Baldassarre Castiglione; and that it was restaged in the following year at Rome, by order of the new Medici Pope Leo X. It is also common historical and critical practice, when narrating the first performance in 1513, to quote a letter which Castiglione himself wrote back afterwards to the author of the play, Bibbiena, who had not been present at the début in Urbino. The letter contains the following remark: "Del resto poi si mutorno poche cose, ma pur alcune scene, che forse non si potevano recitare: ma poco o niente . . ." ("For the rest, not many things were changed, except for some scenes which perhaps could not be performed: otherwise little or nothing . . .").[2]

There are questions arising from this casual comment which seem never to have been faced by critics. It seems that no scholar has been willing to acknowledge, let alone to explain, just what Castiglione meant in practice by his relatively simple remarks. What sort of things were changed, and why? What kind of scenes were they "which perhaps could not be performed"? What sorts of reason could there be for making such a judgement? Insoluble physical or technical problems? Social or moral inhibitions?

If we look through the text of *Calandra*, we can offer a number of speculations about what might have turned out to be difficult

1 I use the form of the title (as opposed to *Calandria*) now established by Giorgio Padoan in his edition of the play (1985).

2 The letter is included in Padoan 1985, 203-7; and in a number of documentary anthologies and articles, for example in Davico Bonino 1977, vol. 1, 445-8.

or impossible to stage; but everything we say remains as pure guesswork, plausible or implausible, with no hard evidence behind it. For example, there might have been more problems than we would now realise with the scenes (3.23 and 5.1) in which the twins Lidio and Santilla appear on stage together. (This could seem unlikely; but we do not know very much about the inhibitions and limitations which may have affected the staging of classical comedy, in this early period when courtiers were working largely in the dark with no acceptable previous models.) There could have been more understandable difficulties with the short scene of Calandro on his mule (2.10), or with Fulvia's extremely quick change of costume in 3.6, on which the servant Samia actually comments. One sequence which would offer problems even to modern actors, as it stands in the published text, is the one at the beginning of act 3 when a box containing Calandro himself seems to be carried on to the stage by a single porter, which would involve an unusual feat of physical strength. The use of more than one porter seems to clash with the dialogue in 3.2 between the porter and the *Sbirri di dogana.* An alternative solution of using some kind of cart or trolley sits uneasily with the end of 3.3, where Calandro is tricked by Fessenio into taking the porter's part and carrying the box himself: he is dismissed by his tormentor as "questa bestia sotto la sua soma" ("this beast under his burden"), which suggests literally shouldering the weight. All these points can be discussed theoretically, five hundred years on, as practical staging difficulties, but we have very little evidence as to whether we are on the right lines. Equally, we can do no more than speculate about any thresholds of good taste or prudery which might have prevented certain scenes being acted before a mixed upper-class audience: we have no yardstick by which to measure the shockability of Italian courts of the period, or of the Urbino court in particular. Certainly the explicit female sexual ambitions of Fulvia and Samia, as expressed in scenes 5-10 of act 3, might possibly have overstepped a threshold.

The fact is that we simply do not know which scenes in *Calandra* "perhaps could not be performed", and our ignorance has left most commentators shy of even accepting that there is a question to be asked. If, however, we accept and face our lack of information on this point, then we must be led logically to recognise that there

is another thing which we also do not know – what is the status of the surviving published text of *Calandra*, in relation to those original production problems alluded to by Castiglione? There is no guarantee that the changes or omissions which he mentions relate to an original script which we now possess. It is indeed possible that Bibbiena published his original untouched version, which was then chopped about somewhat (as ever) by actors and producer; but it is equally possible that the text first printed in 1521 represents the version *as already modified in performance*. In that case my speculations in the previous paragraph would be pointless, because the parts of the play which caused problems to Castiglione would not actually appear in the script which we now possess – they would have been cut out or altered. We are not sure, therefore, of the shape of the iceberg of which Castiglione's remarks represent the tip. The question could be general, and could affect many plays in addition to *Calandra*. What real practical relationship existed, for *commedia erudita*, between playtexts for publication and playtexts for performance? Which of the two, if they can be distinguished from one another, did authors (some authors, or all authors) write first? Were the two texts conceived as ideally identical, or ideally separate? What was the physical format in which scripts appeared during the period of production?

On this last point there is another document, still relating to *Calandra*, which is obviously relevant. It is an anonymous letter stored in the Vatican, which reports in detail on the 1513 festivities in Urbino, but comments also in passing on the subsequent revival of *Calandra* in Rome the following year. The comedy was the third main event in the Urbino celebrations . . .

> . . . la terza detta *La Calandra*, che nelle sue difficultà et streteze – ché fu la primiera volta che fusse recitata – fu talmente rappresentata che, volendosi poi per l'autor proprio farla recitare in Roma, né per molte prove fattene riuscitogli, richiese Francesco Maria dil rolo ed dillo ordine secondo l'era stata data fuora in Urbino; et cosí aúto il tutto, lui poi la fece recitare in Roma.[3]

3 Ms. Vat. Urb. Lat. 490, quoted in Padoan 1985, 208; also (with variants, and at second hand) by Davico Bonino 1977, 448. Punctuation of the present version is my own.

> [. . . the third one, called *Calandra*, which with its difficulties and constraints – because it was the first time it had been performed – was staged in such a way that, when the author himself wanted to have it performed in Rome, and failed after many attempts, he asked Francesco Maria [Della Rovere] for the 'rolo' and the 'ordine' with which it had been given out in Urbino; and when he received that, he then had it performed in Rome.]

The passage is tantalising in what it suggests and in what it leaves unexplained. It tells us that Bibbiena himself, the author of the play, had little idea of how to go about mounting it on stage – another confirmation that we are dealing in these early years with forms of theatre which had no performing tradition. Eventually he had to send for something from Urbino which would explain to him how they had done it there – "il rolo et l'ordine". This appears to be some kind of documentary record, a set of production notes. But in what form, exactly? Was it attached to a text of the play with written notes, thus constituting what we would recognise as a 'prompt copy'; or were the performance instructions kept separate from a text still regarded as 'literary'? If it was a prompt copy, did it incorporate the cuts and changes to which Castiglione alludes, and therefore constitute a text different from the one which Bibbiena himself had written? And if it did (again we return to our former question), did Bibbiena then go on to publish the prompt copy text, or his original unperformed composition?

The ignorance of scholars is underlined yet again – we know remarkably little about the practical side of staging a *commedia erudita* in an Italian court, academy or private house during the first half of the sixteenth century. In particular we can only guess what vicissitudes a humanist playwright had to undergo at the hands of amateur actors with limited ability and experience.[4]

4 An extremely rare piece of evidence is the anonymous unpublished comedy *Crivello* from Venice, dated by Padoan as belonging to the 1540s. It survives only in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana: co. Marc. It. XI 90 (6744), cc. 114*v*, 161*r*. In the manuscript, occasional passages are 'cut' by being crossed through; one or two lines are re-written; and speeches in one scene are redistributed between characters (sharing lines more evenly between an indistinguishable group of *bravi*). In addition, the list

On the strength of our acquaintance with later theatre practice, both amateur and professional it is easy to assume that liberties were constantly taken with an author's original – but this has to remain an assumption, because documents so far made available rarely refer to the question, and our disturbing snippets relating to *Calandra* are not going to be followed up by a body of further evidence. Part of our ignorance relates to the manuscript presentation of the text itself, possibly in successive versions, during the rehearsal and performance period. Another comedy staged in Urbino in 1513, Nicola Grasso's *Eutychia*, is described in its printed editions as being "trascritta dallo exemplare del magnifico messer Hieronymo Staccoli, gentiluomo urbinate" ("transcribed from the copy owned by messer Hieronymo Staccoli, gentleman of Urbino");[5] but we are not told exactly what an "exemplare" was (author's text, or producer's text), or why the unknown Messer Hieronymo should have had one worth copying from. On the question of the physical format of playscripts, one other relevant piece of information comes from 1496, before the first classical-style comedies were written in the vernacular. Some translated texts of Roman comedies were not available to be sent from the Duke of Ferrara to the Marquis of Mantua, because the scripts had been physically dismembered. Each actor had been given his own part to learn separately, and had never given it back – there was no integral master copy remaining, and the actors had since scattered all over Europe:

> . . . volemo che la sappia che quando Nui facessimo recitare dicte Comedie, il fu dato la parte sua a cadauno di quelli che li havevano a intervenire, acciocché imparassero li versi a mente; et depoi che furono recitate, Nui non avessimo cura di farle ridurre altramente insieme, né tenerne copia alcuna, et il volergele ridurre al presente sería quasi impossibile per ritrovarsi parte di quelle persone,

of characters assigns roles (sometimes more than one) to the individual actors. The interventions on the script are not very numerous, but it seems to be the only document surviving from the period which might rank as a 'prompt copy'.

5 Nicola Grasso, *Eutychia* (1524, and the subsequent editions of 1527, 1530, 1534, and 1554).

> ch'intervennero in dicte Commedie, in Franza, parte a Napoli, et alcuni a Modena et a Reggio . . .[6]
>
> [. . . you should know that when we had these comedies performed, each individual of those who were to take part was given his own part, so they could memorize their lines; and after the performance, we were not concerned about bringing them back together again, or keeping any [complete] copy, and an attempt to do that now would be almost impossible because some of those people who took part in the said comedies are in France, some in Naples, and some in Modena and Reggio . . .]

The spectacle raised by this reference, as regards staging practice in the days of incunabula, would be hair-raising to any modern director of an amateur dramatic production. It certainly brings home to us how utterly different was the attitude and methodology of these early gentlemen amateurs,[7] and how little we can rely on comfortable modern assumptions, when we consider the range of possible relationships between a surviving printed playtext and the words which courtly audiences heard on the night of a performance.

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That we should learn to be careful when discussing the status of Italian *commedia erudita* scripts is something that can be clarified and emphasised by contrast. Scholars who deal with English Tudor and Stuart drama have understood for a long time that their dramatists, for the most part, did not write for the printed page,

6 Letter from Ercole d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, 5 February 1496; quoted in Bonino 1977, 419.

7 As late as 1543, in the dedicatory letter to the first edition of *La sporta* (Florence: [Giunti]), we find Giovan Battista Gelli facing the same problem. He is trying to salvage his text from the garbled versions produced by cobbling together the parts distributed to single actors: "dovendo io, comandato dalla necessità, publicare questa mia Sporta per non lasciarla andar cosí rotta e malconcia come io intendo che ella è, per essere stata rimessa insieme dalle parti di quegli che la recitorno . . ." ("Being obliged, out of necessity, to publish this *Sporta* of mine, so as not to let it stay as broken and battered as it now is, having been reassembled from the roles of those who performed it . . .").

rarely oversaw the publishing of their work, and were at the mercy (if their scripts were printed at all) of the caprices and inaccuracies of printers, editors and pirating transcribers. We only have to look at what must still be the bible of all students of Elizabethan comedy – the classic study by Muriel Bradbrook (1955)[8] – to collect a series of statements which make the point clear:

> Books were one thing, plays another. (21)
>
> The integrity of an Elizabethan play was less stable than that of printed literature. (ibid.)
>
> It is not reasonable to expect that a play should remain on the boards for thirty years without modification. (23)
>
> Even Shakespeare's First Folio, handsome and dignified as it was, bore the marks of 'spoken words which had strayed on to the page' in its typography and layout. (22)[9]

Bradbrook also acknowledges that things changed in Stuart times, with a deliberate attempt to turn purely theatrical scripts into something that was also 'literature':

> With Ben Jonson's publication of his plays in folio in 1616, the dignity of plays was asserted . . . There was much ribald comment at his raising stage plays to the status of Works. (23)
>
> Fletcher and Chapman wrote for a sophisticated but narrow group; moreoever, they wrote not only for the actor but the reader of books also (6)

The reason for spending time on these statements about English drama is not that we should apply them unthinkingly also to the Italian playscripts of the sixteenth century. On the contrary, the point may be that Italian humanist playwrights worked very differently. But the quotations from Bradbrook establish some questions which must be regularly asked about dramatic texts in

8 My page references are to the paperback edition issued by Cambridge University Press in 1979, as the second volume in Bradbrook 1979.

9 Sampson 1952, 40-54. The quotation is from an analysis of the Folio by Anthony Sampson.

general, and which scholars are not yet in the habit of applying to *commedia erudita*. The answers to those questions, for the Italian material, may be diametrically opposite to those valid for Shakespeare and Dekker – but whatever the answers may turn out to be, the questions need to be asked, before progress can be made in the study of Italian Renaissance comedy as a theatrical genre. The fact that answers may not easily be forthcoming, through scarcity of evidence, is no reason for excluding the questions from our methodology: an awareness that the questions exist must necessarily influence what we can say about the evidence which we do have available.

Bradbrook sums up the issue, for Shakespeare, in words which she puts at the very beginning of her volume, as a premise to all the rest: "For him [Shakespeare], plays belonged to an oral tradition: they sprang from the special conditions of the Elizabethan public theatre" (1979, 5). What should we give as a corresponding premise to the study of *commedia erudita*? Should we simply make a statement which is the direct opposite of Bradbrook's? "For a humanist playwright, plays belonged to a written tradition: they sprang from the special conditions of a private theatre, developed for an élite audience out of the schoolroom and study".

The manner in which the genre developed, which is well known and well documented, might well support such a premise. Ariosto (and just before him, the pseudonymous Publio Philippo Mantovano) offered original plays in the vernacular which were deliberately, even polemically, constructed on the model of Roman comedy, after a long series of attempts (particularly numerous and programmatic in Ferrara and Mantua) at staging Plautus and Terence directly in translation. Ariosto's prologues, and those of Bibbiena, Machiavelli, and others after him, clearly acknowledge the debt to, and imitation of, the Roman masters. Yet these originals had been known principally through study off the page. For generations, even centuries, they had been read rather than performed; and if there is reasonable evidence that by the fifteenth century they were being staged in Latin by academics in universities,[10] it is obvious that by

10 Also in courts, especially the papal court. The most famous example is the massive celebration on the Campidoglio in 1513: see Cruciani 1968.

that time the performing conventions had to be invented anew, on the strength of speculation, common sense, and existing but quite separate theatrical practices derived from court entertainment and from religious drama. Roman comedies had survived as written evidence, treasured by humanist educators, of the life and thoughts of antiquity; they held an honoured place in literary and even philosophical tradition; Terence in particular was prized as much for his conventional wisdom, as expressed in *sententiae* quoted out of context, as for his dramatic plotting or entertainment value. Even someone like Ariosto, who had been through a good apprenticeship as a performer of Roman comedy in translation, would have come first of all to these scripts as books rather than plays; and in the minds of humanist playwrights in general the model which they decided to 'imitate' would exist primarily as a written or printed text, exhaustively studied in the schoolroom. The enterprise of writing a *commedia erudita* was an uncertain one, with few precedents, between 1500 and 1525: the acceptability of the result would be measured against literary standards at least as much as against ideas of theatrical craftsmanship.

Such standards are reflected most obviously in the conventions according to which plays were recorded on paper, in printed form but also in manuscript – conventions with which we are all familiar, but on which we rarely comment. Classical plays which had entered the literary canon, and which had been read as books since late antiquity, recorded the words to be spoken by the characters in the drama, and very little else.[11] Any Italian Renaissance play with ambitions to participate in a classical tradition (whether comedy, tragedy, or an early *dramma mescidato*) tends to follow this sanctified written model, and thus to exclude all forms of stage direction. Drama which we class as 'medieval', in all parts of Europe, is perfectly willing to describe or narrate (often in Latin[12]) any essential stage action which is not accompanied or explained by dialogue; but humanist comedies and tragedies

11 See also, now, Andrews 2022, 117-23, and the illustrations numbered 1.1 and 18.1. in that volume.

12 Vernacular stage directions, often quite extensive, seem to have been more common in fifteenth-century Italy. See for example Faccioli 1975.

seem deliberately to avoid this practice.[13] They never even use the equivalent of 'enter' or 'exit', but – as we all know – identify separate scenes as beginning whenever an entrance or exit takes place, simply listing at the start of each scene the characters who will participate in it. (The scenes are often titled and numbered – "Scena prima", "Scena seconda", etc – but not always, in earlier editions). If a character enters late after a monologue by someone else (Ariosto, *La cassaria* [prosa]; 2.2), or if one character is hiding and eavesdropping on another (*Gli ingannati*, 2.6), all this has to be deduced by the reader (or the producer) from the content of the words actually spoken; and the same is true of major physical events, such as acts of violence. What is more, the convention demands that only those characters who will actually speak are listed at the start of a scene, and the presence of mutes also has to be identified by deduction. This presumably follows the tendency in Plautus for numbers of 'extras' and walk-ons to be deducible from the script in the same manner. The way the convention emerges in Italian comedy can nevertheless still seem surprising. When reading Bibiena's *Calandra*, act 5 Scenes 7-8, we realise belatedly from Calandro's and Fulvia's remarks[14] that Fulvia's brothers have been brought on stage by Calandro as witnesses, though they are not listed in the text. Similarly, in *Gli ingannati* 3.7, when the two old men Virginio and Gherardo are confusing Fabrizio with his twin sister Lelia, a single line indicates the presence of servants on stage: "E voi aviate cura che costei non vada altrove" ("And you make sure she doesn't go away"). The man mistaken for Lelia is entrusted to at least two custodians, so "she" will not run away – the easiest assumption is that they are Spela and Scatizza, already introduced as servants to Gherardo and Virginio respectively.

The contrast with texts of *sacre rappresentazioni* or other

13 Fifteenth-century plays, such as Poliziano's *Orfeo*, which do contain some stage directions, are sometimes described by Italian scholars as being structured like a *sacra rappresentazione*. In fact this comment is often more applicable to textual presentation than to 'structure' in any theatrical sense.

14 "CALANDRO E *vi meno perché vediate* l'onore the l'ha fatto *a voi* . . ." (5.7; "CALANDRO And I'm bringing you here so you can see what honour she is doing you . . ."). "FULVIA Fratelli miei . . ." ("FULVIA Brothers of mine . . ."; 5.8). Cf. Padoan 1985, 180-1. There is no controversy about the implications of these lines.

religious plays may be significant in more than one way. Humanist playwrights were polemically distancing themselves from what we now call their 'medieval' precedents, effectively conducting an élitist theatrical revolution and rejecting what they probably saw as plebeian forms. Different conventions of presentation would help to underline this fact. It is also true true that 'medieval' Italian scripts, like Muriel Bradbrook's Tudor ones, were written initially for performance rather than for publication, aiming from the start to act as prompt copies. So, we may ask, was the "rolo et ordine" of *Calandra*, requested from Urbino by Bibbiena, simply a text with some stage directions added, with more the appearance of a 'medieval' theatrical text (or indeed a modern one)?

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Bradbrook makes it clear that English Tudor drama was likely to be printed some time after the manuscript versions, chopped and edited, had been used for performance. According to remarks already quoted from her, such publication of playscripts was a kind of afterthought; and indeed there was some resistance in respectable cultural circles (opposed and overcome by Ben Jonson in particular) to the idea of giving plays the dignity of print. We should remind ourselves that the printing history of *commedia erudita* in Italy tends to be quite different, and starts from an earlier date. One of the most common Italian patterns is that a comedy would be composed for performance on a particular occasion, performed on that occasion, and then published relatively soon (by English standards) after the first performance. Such a model applies to much of court and academic theatre in the second quarter of the century, and earlier still to the very first comedies of all: Ariosto's two prose plays (performed 1508 and 1509, published c.1510), Grasso's *Eutychia* (performed 1513, published 1524), Bibbiena's *Calandra* (performed 1513, published 1521), Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (performed c.1518, published 1521). It is true that in the period before the Sack of Rome authors were not always directly involved in publication, and may not have approved of the result; but as the century wore on there was a large number of cases where performance and publication emerge as linked authorial intention rather than separate activities. Even in

the substantial number of cases where publication was posthumous or delayed (the later Ariosto, Ruzante, Machiavelli's *Clizia*, to name the most obvious), we can detect a cultural assumption that playtexts which have acquired a reputation ought to appear in print – especially, though not only, if the dramatist also had a reputation in some other literary field. Muriel Bradbrook shows us that this was not taken for granted in other European cultures.

There are of course other patterns to be found with *commedia erudita*, alternative histories which are equally significant in their different ways. There are many comedies, especially later in the century, about which no information on performance has survived, leaving us unable to comment on the relationship between staging and publication. A smaller number of texts were printed, according to current evidence,[15] well before they were performed (Belo's *Beco*, Bentivoglio's *Geloso*, some of Parabosco and Cecchi)[16]. Some are generally accepted not to have been performed at all, and this includes a few texts which have attracted a lot of critical attention since – Belo's *Pedante*, Annibale Caro's *Straccioni*, Bruno's *Candelaio*, all of which appear in modern editions or anthologies. These examples prove at least a partial tendency to write with a view to publication in the first instance. On the other hand, there are a number of texts which were never printed at all in the sixteenth century, and have been resurrected since from manuscript – a list which ranges from the early Ruzante and the anonymous *La Veniexiana*, which have little to do with humanistic literary models, to perfectly 'regular' compositions by Cecchi, Giannotti and Grazzini.[17]

15 The starting point for collecting evidence about performing and publishing dates for *commedia erudita* must be Mango 1966, which gives summaries, history and first printings of a substantial majority of relevant plays. There are some omissions, however, partly due to the author's arbitrary decision to omit any script including non-standard dialect; and a few editions are missed through a reluctance to search in libraries outside Rome.

16 *Beco* pub. 1538, perf. 1540; *Geloso* pub. 1544, perf. 1549; Parabosco: *La notte* pub. 1546, perf. 1548; Cecchi: *Gl'incantesimi* and *I dissimili* both pub. 1550, both perf. 1556.

17 In the case of Giovan Maria Cecchi, at least twelve plays were first printed in the nineteenth century or later. The case which still needs most investigation is that of the three relatively early verse comedies of Lorenzo di

Certain individual cases are worth mentioning separately, either because they are curious in themselves or because they might prove to be examples of a more concealed general pattern. One is that of the Intronati Academy's *La pellegrina* (attributed in print to Girolamo Bargagli), staged in 1589 at the Florentine ducal wedding which has become such a landmark for students of Renaissance festival. We now know from Nino Borsellino (1974)[18] that this comedy was composed as early as the 1560s, left in manuscript, and resurrected posthumously by a relative of Bargagli as a suitable text for the wedding celebrations. But we also find that the manuscript was quite heavily censored before its eventual performance, with the removal of a quantity of anticlerical satire. The gaps which were thus created produce a certain amount of confusion in relation to one of the sub-plots.

That story, in its way, is simple and explicable. More puzzling is the case of the first version of Ariosto's *Negromante*, which he offered to Pope Leo X in 1520, but was not performed at that time. Like others of the author's later comedies, this version was printed posthumously, no doubt by people hoping to capitalise on Ariosto's reputation. As many as six separate editions appeard in 1535,[19] followed by two more in 1538 and one in 1542.[20] The second version of the comedy, performed successfully in 1528 and containing revisions which make it a much more workable text, did not see publication until a postumous edition in 1551, followed only by reprintings in 1562 and 1587.[21] The puzzle is why such frenetic competitive activity

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Filippo Strozzi. They are now available in a modern edition by Gareffi (1980); but the evidence proposed for dating them is either unconvincing in itself or confusingly presented.

18 The chapter on "Il manoscritto della *Pellegrina*" is at 107-19. More recent findings have modified Borsellino's account slightly with regard to exact dates, but not upset their substance.

19 In 1991, existing surveys of Ariosto editions did not fully record how many different printings there were of the first *Negromante* in 1535 – there are two separate anonymous ones which were often thought to be identical, and both a quarto and an octavo by Bindoni and Pasini. The full picture is now deducible from the online listings in EDIT/ICCU.

20 All three are Venetian editions: Vidali, and also Zoppino, in 1538; Bindoni and Pasini in 1542.

21 Giolitto, Venice, in 1551 and 1562; the latter printing appeared both

among printers should have favoured the earlier version – my own preference for the second one may be a subjective judgement, but one would suppose that the text actually performed would be more likely to survive. That, after all, is the case with Ariosto's *La Lena*. The first version (without the "coda" referred to in the surviving Prologue) has not survived in print, even though it was staged in 1528: it has been entirely supplanted by the revised text performed just a year later.

A third case of a special textual history is not mysterious in itself, but it perhaps ought to be borne constantly in mind as a story which, for all we know, might apply to a number of plays of the period. Aretino's *Cortigiana* was published in Venice in 1534, well after he settled in Venice; and as Christopher Cairns has pointed out in detail, it contains a network of references to contemporary individuals who were important to the author at that period of his life (1985, chapter 2). The version left in manuscript, and published for the first time in 1970,[22] is accepted as being earlier, written for performance in Rome in 1525. The changes made for the 1534 edition are partly explicable with reference to Aretino's precarious personal career; but there are also signs that the text was revised on what might be seen as artistic grounds, with a view to making a performing text conform more closely to literary canons shared by sophisticated readers of the period. Many modern readers might accept, on an impressionistic level, that the 1525 text feels more lively and more intimate, that it seems both to tease and to harangue a live audience with more energy than the 1534 version. A detailed analysis supports this impression in one symptomatic area: every case in the 1525 text in which a soliloquising character addresses the audience directly ("across the footlights", to use an anachronistic phrase) has been carefully ironed out in the 1534 edition to an alternative formula. Even the 'anti-Humanist' Aretino was reluctant, in print at least, to break the classical prohibition against acknowledging the existence of an audience – though his original instincts, in a purely performing

separately and incorporated in Porcacchi's collection of all Ariosto's comedies. The 1587 edtition, also Venetian, is by Cavalcalupo.

22 Edited by Innamorati (1970); and now also in the collected *Aretino: Tutte le Opere: Teatro*, edited by Giorgio Petrocchi (1971).

text, told him that such direct address contributed effectively both to humour and to satirical aggression.[23]

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La Cortigiana is, as far as I know, the only thoroughly proven case of a *commedia erudita* being written in one form for performance and then revised for printing using more literary criteria – the only one, that is, of which a manuscript giving the earlier text has survived for our subsequent perusal. But in how many other cases might a similar process have taken place? We are back to the kind of question raised by the correspondence on *Calandra*. If we were to accept more often that composition of a script might have taken place in two phases, then we might alter our view on certain received versions of theatre history – for example, the fact that Ariosto produced his first two comedies in prose and the remainder in verse. It is worth pursuing this in more detail, as an example of the questions that can be raised by accepting that performing texts and published texts might sometimes differ.

The issue can conveniently be made to centre upon an exchange of letters between Ariosto and the Marquis of Mantua (Federico II Gonzaga) in the spring of 1524.[24] On 18 March we have a letter from Ariosto accompanying copies of "tutte le commedie che mi trovo aver fatto, che sono quattro" ("all the comedies which I have so far composed, four in all") – omitting, therefore, the unfinished *Scolastica/Studenti*. Two of these, he says, the Marquis is unlikely to have seen before (and in fact neither *Negromante* nor *Lena* was printed during their author's lifetime). Ariosto continues:

> l'altre, ancora che sieno a stampa per colpa di persone che me le rubaro, non sono però nel modo in che io le ho ridotte; massimamente *La Cassaria* che tutta è quasi rinnovata.
>
> [the others, although they exist in print because of people who stole them from me, are not however in the version which I have

23 For more details, including evidence of the prohibition, see Andrews 1988, no. 2 in the present volume.

24 Reproduced in Davico Bonino 1977, vol. 1, 425-6.

now produced; most of all *La Cassaria*, which has been more or less entirely rewritten.]

He expresses anxiety about the risk of further pirated editions. He fears that any unauthorised printer is likely to mess up the texts as they stand; but in any case he is not ready to publish them yet, since he thinks they are still in need of linguistic revision.

On 25 March, Gonzaga replied with suitable expressions of gratitude, but had to confess that the scripts received were not quite what he had hoped for, because "a me non piace de farle recitare in rima" ("I don't like having them performed in rhyme"): "Però ve le remando; se havete le due ultime scritte in prosa, et anche *La Cassaria*, reconcia et mutata com'è questa in versi, haverò piacer me ne facciate copia" ("So I am returning them to you: if you do have the latest two in a prose version, and also *La Cassaria*, since it's now been revised and altered in verse, I would be glad if you could send me copies").[25]

Ariosto had to beg respectfully to differ with his patron's taste in this regard, and his reply of 5 April is worth quoting in full:

> Ill. Ed Ecc. Signor mio Osservand.mo. Mi duole che le mie commedie per essere in versi non abbiano soddisfatto a Vostra Ecc. A me pareva che stessero cosí meglio che in prosa; ma li giudicii son diversi. Le due ultime io le feci da principio nel modo cosí strano, e mi duole di non averle anch'io fatte in prosa per aver potuto satisfarne a quella. La quale sia contenta d'accettare il buon animo. Io le riferisco grazia che me le abbia (poi che non fanno per lei) rimandate subito. In buona grazia della quale mi raccomando sempre.
>
> [My Illustrious Lord. I am sorry that my comedies didn't satisfy your Excellency, because they are in verse. I thought they were better in that form than in prose; but tastes differ. I wrote the latest two from the start in that strange form, and I regret that I didn't also do the prose versions which would have pleased you. I can only ask you to accept my good intentions. I humbly thank you

25 I differ from Davico Bonino in wanting to place a comma after *La Cassaria*; and my detailed interpretation of the meaning of this sentence depends to some extent on this decision about punctuation.

> for having sent them straight back (since they do not suit you). I express my devotion, as always.]

Ariosto's irritation with the fact that *Cassaria* and *Suppositi* were published without his permission is familiar to all biographers and textual historians.[26] There has been less tendency, though, to face a further implication which is at least possible – namely that Ariosto never intended to publish any prose version, however carefully vetted, of these two plays, but that from the start he regarded verse as the proper form for any published dramatic text. If he did think this, then he would undoubtedly have been following his meticulous loyalty to the Roman models, since all antique drama, in whatever genre, was written in verse. In that case, we may ask, why did he produce prose versions at all, and what is the status of those texts? The answer must surely lie in performing practicalities; or in the preference of his patrons for prose rather than verse; or in a combination of those two factors. Isabella d'Este is know to have preferred translations of Plautus and Terence to be in prose rather than in verse (Stefani 1979); and when one tastes even briefly the turgid long-winded approach of verse translators of the late fifteenth century, one can understand her point of view. She found a performance of *Bacchides* in 1502 "longa et fastidiosa" ("long and tedious"),[27] because it was not leavened sufficiently by the visual distraction of the *balli intermezzi* which courtiers at that time seemed to rely on to help them tolerate such enforced doses of culture. And it may well have been partly through her influence that the very first attempt at original *commedia erudita*, as opposed to translation, was written and performed in prose. The anonymous Formicone was composed and performed in 1503 by the school of Francesco Vigilio in Mantua, which was an object of Isabella's patronage; it is generally assumed that the author "Publio

26 On 17 December 1532 he wrote to the Duke of Urbino of how "i *Suppositi* e la *Cassaria* rubatami da li recitatori già vent'anni che fuor rappresentate in Ferrara, andaro con mia grandissima displicentia in stampa" ("*I Suppositi* and *La Cassaria*, stolen from me by the actors a good twenty years ago when they were performed in Ferrara, went into print to my great displeasure").

27 In a letter of 3 February 1502, referred to by Stefani 1979, 64.

Philippo Mantovano" was one of Vigilio's pupils.[28] If we then find Isabella's son Federico Gonzaga expressing a firm preference in 1532 for prose comedies, and indeed refusing to consider staging a text "reconcia et mutata com'è questa in versi" ("revised and altered in verse as this one is"), this reinforces a picture of the prejudices which Ariosto might have had to accommodate also in Ferrara in 1508 and 1509. In such a case, the prose versions could have been performing texts only, written with a certain reluctance, with the intention of re-drafting them in verse before submission to a learned reading public.[29] If this is true, then the unauthorised printing of the prose versions around 1510 would indeed make Ariosto angry, with echoes of his resentment still lingering in the letters of 1532. His subsequent supervision of later prose editions, such as the *Suppositi* of 1524, would then be interpreted as making the best of a bad job, and at least editing the language of the play to standards acceptable to his increasingly meticulous criteria. Having gained more confidence in his own opinion, he wrote the next two comedies in verse straight away – "in that strange form", to use the ironically defiant words of his letter of 5 April 1532. Modern critics have expressed, and may continue to express, reservations about the success of Ludovico's *endecasillabi sdruccioli*; we may analyse and approve the nascent dramaturgical skill of the prose scripts which have come down to us; and we must surely recognise that contemporary taste and history seem to have favoured prose comedies from the very start of the genre. Nevertheless we must observe as a fact that Ariosto preferred verse, and we must acknowledge the possibility that in those first two plays he may have distinguished sharply between what he wanted to bequeath to posterity and what was forced on him for the first performances by prudence and theatrical compromise. If his preferences were

28 See Mantovano 1980, 9-30.

29 Luigina Stefani, in her article in *Paragone* (1979), suggests that before 1500, when Plautus and Terence were being translated, humanists would produce reading versions in prose but insist on verse when it came to staging the plays. If this is so, then the prose versions might have their origin in a schoolroom 'crib' for aristocratic pupils; but I am uncertain on what evidence Stefani bases her statement of a clear-cut distinction between prose for reading and verse for performance.

not widely shared, then "tastes differ". But in how many other cases, concealed from us by lack of documentary evidence, may a similar story lie behind a text of *commedia erudita*? We should note that Gian Maria Cecchi also re-wrote in verse a number of his own prose plays, composed and performed in the 1540s and 1550s, for a collected editon in 1585; thus showing the same discrimination between performance script and definitive published text which we are cautiously attributing to Ariosto.

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In all of these fragmentary speculations there are perhaps more questions than answers, though some of the questions are in my view too pressing to be ignored. Rather than claiming to offer new definitive discoveries, this essay aims to influence the methodology, even just the attitude, with which scholars approach the texts of Italian Renaissance comedies. Those comedies are part of theatre history, as well as literary history, and they should be approached as theatre historians approach play scripts from later periods. In other words, due allowance must be made for the relative fluidity of a text for performance, and for the way in which non-textual considerations (theatrical, social, even economic) always have to flesh out and explain what the surviving verbal text has to offer.

The tendency in theatre studies, affected by current fashions in theatre practice, is to give the non-textual elements almost more importance than the text itself. In this respect, *commedia erudita* is not going to support such prejudices, and may even offer a salutary corrective to them. In the first place, our knowledge about performing practice in Italian court theatre is so scanty that the verbal text is usually the only hard evidence which we possess. But in any case, the comparison made earlier wth the practices and assumptions of English Tudor theatre show immediately that in Italy we are dealing with a different phenomenon, one which its practitioners themselves regarded from the very beginning as part of approved high-class literary production, rather than as an artisan activity of dubious respectability. Part of the revolution from above which Italian Humanists were operating implied precisely that play scripts should acquire such new social and cultural status, along

with other more sanctified genres which were equally dependent on, and measured against, classical models.

My concluding generalisation, therefore, tends to point in two opposite directions. On the one hand we need as scholars to adjust our sights to some extent before we can claim that we are really treating these plays as plays, as performing texts rather than as verbal texts, as theatrical rather than literary phenomena. This means no more than that certain questions need to be borne in mind more often, questions which may have been faced inadequately in the past. Having accepted these, however, and having integrated them into our methodology, we may then be obliged to observe that their use remains more limited when studying *commedia erudita* than when analysing theatre of other periods. Many of the texts before us appear, when studied without prejudice, to be less full-bloodedly 'theatrical' than some of us, as theatre historians, might have wished.

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4

Scripted Theatre and the *Commedia dell'Arte**

There has always been discussion – perhaps more in the form of questions than of answers—about the influence of *commedia dell'arte* on other forms of theatre. The most obvious difficulty in pursuing such a question is that, by definition, there are no texts of *arte* performances from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since the actors 'improvised'—whatever that may turn out to mean – from a summary scenario, they used no written script. Whenever we find a written script which looks as if it might be informative, then by purist definition it is no longer improvised and therefore no longer *commedia dell'arte*. This creates a problem of evidence which in strict logic is insoluble, and throws us back on various forms of speculation in which instinct, hunch, probability and even practical experience must all play their part. We have to decide empirically, not logically, what can rank in any dramatic script as 'evidence' of *commedia dell'arte* influence on non-scripted performing practice. I propose here – on the basis of hunch, probability and some limited practical experience – that a part of the evidence which might be considered, alongside other features, is the structuring of dialogue in a way which could be called 'modular'.

In his most recent study on the *commedia dell'arte,*[1] Roberto Tessari explores the tension which existed among professional actors, before and after 1600, between the more respectable and less respectable ends of the profession: between the acceptable and unacceptable faces of what we now see as a single phenomenon. His premise is that *commedia dell'arte* grew out of an entirely unacceptable form of theatre; and that although by 1600 the actors

* This is a reduced and rearranged version of the original article.

1 See Tessari 1984. Since then many of his arguments have been reinforced by the studies of Siro Ferrone, especially in Ferrone 1993.

were seeking and gaining a new social and artistic status, they were still aware of, and nervous about, their historical origins. The new status came from their having adopted the forms of respectable Humanist comedy: their plots, settings and characters all followed the modernised Plautine models which had been imposed on courts and academies as the correct new secular theatre for the upper classes. (This confers a curious status on the *arte* genre: a popular non-literary form of theatre which could not have come into existence without a more literary drama as its model). However, the method which the professionals applied to this material, the method in particular of improvising rather than learning a script, came from elsewhere. Without any hard evidence to prove it, we can only conjecture that these practices already existed, and must have been adapted from the practice of the only professional actors who existed before 1500: itinerant companies who performed in streets, squares and fairgrounds, and who had no cultural or social status at all.

It seems reasonable to assume that many such performers were illiterate; and that in consequence their approach to creating comic 'scripts' and memorising them for performance would be different from the methods adopted by anyone able to write things down. In the first place, like comedians of all times and places, they would want to build up a mental store of single jokes, ranging from one-liners through question-and-answer routines to quite complex verbal and physical sequences. These would be created, learned, and rehearsed piecemeal, and then used wherever they would fit; the narrative line being adapted to fit the joke if necessary, rather than *vice versa*. Such jokes would be the ancestors of what in *arte* jargon were eventually called *lazzi* – though the word is of relatively late coinage, and tends to be over-used by scholars as a term of refuge. But as well as a plentiful stock of such autonomous jokes, these actors would need a technique for creating and remembering material which actually led somewhere, longer dialogues which were capable of building a narrative and therefore of contributing to the plot. The hypothesis I now propose – and it can be no more than hypothesis, since we are inevitably cut off from the mental processes of the creative intelligent illiterate – is that these dialogues too would have to be built out of small manageable units, not so very different from the

autonomous *lazzi*. Each stage of a dialogued exchange would be identifiable by the piece of information it conveyed – or by the joke it explored – and in memorising the sequence the stress would be on conveying the information and/or getting the laugh, rather than on repeating identical words every time.

These conjectures were not formed in a vacuum, as a piece of *a priori* theorising. They are, on the contrary, an *a posteriori* response to the empirical observation that certain dramatic texts seem to fall into a characteristic pattern – one whereby dialogue is built out of short units, many of which are interchangeable, or removeable, or indeed recyclable into a different narrative context. Ultimately the argument revolves round the status of the texts in which I claim to see such patterns. We have established that there can be no such thing as a '*commedia dell'arte* text'. There can be texts, however, which for one reason or another we accept as having some relationship to *commedia dell'arte*. If a number of texts in that category show a tendency to fragmentary or modular structure, then this reinforces the proposition that improvised texts were built up in the way I have described. But we shall also have to stand the argument on its head. If we find evidence of modular structure in texts which are not so obviously related to *commedia dell'arte*, then we might be looking at an example of improvised theatre influencing scripted theatre. The reasoning is inevitably circular, and intellectually unsatisfactory, in that it can only rely on consensual judgements as to what is plausible. Given the nature of the phenomenon we are studying, we are not likely to find anything better.

It is in fact paradoxically encouraging that the example which can introduce us to modular dialogue is a text which has no clear documented status at all. It is a crucial piece of evidence in a number of ways, and a translation of most of it is reproduced as Appendix A to this article, with bibliographical details. (For convenience, we shall also quote extracts from it in the body of this discussion). As the Appendix shows, the dialogue was collected by Vito Pandolfi in his six volumes of documentary evidence on *commedia dell'arte*, published in 1957, in the part where he is offering examples of the humour and style of the individual *arte* masks, getting as near as he can to the pioneering years of the genre between around 1550 and 1620. Most of his examples are not dramatic texts, but

spin-off material in the form of songs, verse dialogues, pamphlet compositions also in verse, and some early publications known to be the work of *arte* performers (who by this time were no longer illiterate). The fact that the material takes this non-dramatic form means that while it is hugely informative about the way in which Pantalone, Graziano and Zani made people laugh, it tells us little or nothing about how they structured and performed their jokes in front of an audience, without a written script. But there is this one text which is an exception: a dialogue in prose between the Venetian Magnifico and his servant Zani. By a satisfying coincidence, this exemplifies the central master-servant confrontation, placed firmly in the Republic of Venice, which some scholars see as the core around which the rest of the *commedia dell'arte* grew (in the sense that it was in Venice where the master would be a local bourgeois merchant, and the servant an immigrant from the Alpine valleys above Bergamo).

Pandolfi's text appears with no context or explanation, in a single copy of a printed pamphlet in Florence's National Library. It has the ring of live performance about it from start to finish, so much so as to make us hold our breath and wonder whether it comes somewhere close to what we would so much like to find: the transcription by a literate observer of a non-scripted performance. Rightly or wrongly, one wants to see this text as a piece of theatrical pirating, the sixteenth-century equivalent, however much less reliable, of a tape recorder.

The plot of the scene is very simple, and could be either an autonomous sketch or part of a longer play. The elderly lustful Magnifico, not yet christened Pantalone, wants to make contact with a courtesan. He sends his servant, country bumpkin Zani from Bergamo, into the lady's house with a message and a poem. Eventually Zani comes out again, having had such a good time that he totally forgot to do what he was sent for. The majority of the exchanges, in relation to this summary, are a series of delaying tactics, most of which involve Zani teasing or insulting his master, and thus lean heavily on the universal comic device of dignity subverted by impudence. In the Appendix, I have placed editorial asterisks between sections of the dialogue, to suggest that the scene breaks down into a succession of autonomous units: each one uses

a simple formula, with only a minority conveying information or advancing the plot.

The sketch starts with the Magnifico's expository monologue, in which he informs the audience directly of his sexual ambitions. But then we have what can only be described as the 'Come out here!' routine:

> [2] Giani[2] Plasí.
> [3] Magnifico Viene un poco fora.
> [4] Giani Che plasi a Vossignoria?
> [5] Magnifico Vien un poco fora, caro Giani.
> [6] Giani Mi?
> [7] Magnifico Ti.
> [8] Giani Che venga fora mi?
> [9] Magnifico Ti, sí, cavallo, spàzate!
> [10] Giani Volontiera, messer sí. A patron, volí che porta il capello?
> [11] Magnifico Che voi fare del capello? Porta la berretta.
> [12] Giani Messer sí. E' vegní a mi.
> [13] Magnifico Che vustu?
> [14] Giani Volí che vegni mi proprio?
> [15] Magnifico Sí, ti proprio.
> [16] Giani Mi proprio in persona?
> [17] Magnifico Sí, in nome di Dio! Vien fora!
> [18] Giani E' vengo, e' son chiluoga: che plasi a la Signoria Vostra?
>
> [Zani (*Appearing in doorway, or at an upper window*) Yes sir? / Magnifico Come out a moment. / Zani What can I do for you, boss? / Magnifico Come out here a moment, my dear chap. / Zani Me? / Magnifico Thee. / Zani You want me to come to thee? / Magnifico Aye, thee, you donkey, get a move on. / Zani At your service, as you see. Shall I wear my hat? / Magnifico To hell with your hat, put your cap on. / Zani Yes siree. Er . . . pardon me . . . / Magnifico Now what? / Zani You want me to come out? / Magnifico Yes, you yourself. / Zani Me myself in person? / Magnifico *YES*, for God's sake, come out! / Zani

2 Either the author or the printer of this text has decided to render Zani's name as "Giani", presumably in an attempt to align it with a Tuscan or standard 'Italian' language register. Modern scholars, writing in all languages, prefer the original north-Italian form of the name.

(*Finally emerging*) I'm coming, I've arrived, I'm here, what can I do for Your Honour?]

This is tedious in print, but it could be transformed by good timing, and by the insistent rhymes (*mí*, *tí*, *sí*, in the two northern dialects) which I have tried to reproduce in English. The Magnifico's attempts to explain himself are then prolonged by the 'I am in love' exchange, where Zani plays variations round his incredulity and derision:

[21] MAGNIFICO E' voio che tu sappi che son inamorao.
[22] GIANI Inamorà?
[23] MAGNIFICO Sí, che son inamorao.
[24] GIANI E' si' inamorà vu?
[25] MAGNIFICO Sí, no l'intendestu, bestia?
[26] GIANI Desif davera?
[27] MAGNIFICO Se digo davera?
[28] GIANI Vo si' inamorà?
[29] MAGNIFICO Mi e'son inamorao.
[30] GIANI Ah ah ah ah!
[31] MAGNIFICO De che ridestu, cavallo?
[32] GIANI E' ridi de vu, che desí che si' inamorà.
[33] MAGNIFICO E tel digo de novo che son inamorao! Perché? E' non ho mi una bella vista da essere inamorao?
[34] GIANI Messer sí, da mulattieri.
[35] MAGNIFICO Oh, te se' pur la gran bestia! Anzi, e' te digo che quella in che e' son inamorà la me vuol tutto el so ben, e la me muore drio per vedermi cosí bella persona.

[MAGNIFICO I want you to know that I am in love. / ZANI In love? / MAGNIFICO Yes, I am in love. / ZANI In love? / MAGNIFICO Yes, idiot, don't you understand? / ZANI You really mean it? / MAGNIFICO Yes, I really mean it. / ZANI *You* are in *love*? / MAGNIFICO Yes, *I* am in *love*. / ZANI (*Collapses with laughter*) / MAGNIFICO What are you laughing at, you clodhopper? / ZANI I thought you'd made a joke. You said you were in love. / MAGNIFICO But I *am* in love, that's what I said. What's the matter, don't I look like a man with normal drives? / ZANI Driving mules, more likely. / MAGNIFICO You cretinous bumpkin! I tell you the girl I am in love with is besotted on me. She's dying for it. She's seen what a fine figure of a man I am.]

Further perusal of the full text shows that there are similar repetitive games played with "How do you know?" (speeches 36-9), "She's sending you up" ("*la ve bertiza*" in the original dialect, 40-4), and the Magnifico supposedly being "as good as dead" (50-6). Later, after further fruitless efforts to advance the plot, there is a sequence in speeches 103-04 where Zani refuses to stop harping loudly on his master's poverty, pointing to the traditional meanness of the Pantalone mask.

All these units of dialogue are separately identifiable, and most can be imagined as equally useful in a different scene with a different story. Their relative autonomy is demonstrated by the fact that I have left out of the translation in the Appendix some sequences where the joke did not translate so well, because of verbal quibbles hard to reproduce. Where I have done this, an omission is noted in my text – but if I had not indicated that something was missing, it is unlikely that most readers would have guessed the fact. The dialogue is composed of small interlocking parts, beads threaded on a string, and many of them can be omitted or replaced without the thread being lost.

More important still, many of these gags are 'elastic', in that each one is capable of being protracted or curtailed at will, according to the audience's response. If the opening suspense in speeches 2-18, about whether Zani is going to come on stage or not, falls flat, then they can easily skip some of it and get on to the next sequence; the "I am in love" unit (21-35) is similarly reduceable; while "How do you know?" (26-39) and "She's sending you up" (40-44) could be made to last longer, if the actors have struck the right rhythm and the audience is happy. All that is needed for a smooth performance is a previously concerted (or at least recognisable) cue line or gesture which brings the sequence to an end. So, to return to the opening unit, when the Magnifico says "Yes, for God's sake . . ." ("*Sí, in nome di Dio . . .*") in speech 17, with the agreed amount of emphasis, the actor Zani accepts that he has now got to come out of the house, even if he has thought of a brilliant variation which would earn him an even louder laugh. It was that kind of professional discipline, subordinating the single effect to the overall flow of the spectacle, which was later recognised as distinguishing a good company from a bad one.

Many of these individual sequences are suspense gags, built up by sheer repetition. This is obviously the easiest shape to use, if the length is really going to be varied – it is a simple business for an actor to go on saying more or less the same thing, with whatever variations of tone and emphasis, until some signal tells him it is time to stop. By the same token, a structure involving suspense poses very few problems: suspense is merely the postponing of a punch line or conclusion which is known to the actors already (and in some cases may be foreseeable to the audience too). As long as the prearranged climax is waiting there as a safety net, the actors can perform almost any verbal acrobatics, however risky, without any fear of seriously losing their balance. This process reaches its peak in the long section 135-56, when Zani comes back from the courtesan's house, and keeps his master poised on the edge of apoplexy as he dreamily recounts his rather equivocal experiences with the lady. There is no verbal repetition here, as in the earlier sequences, apart from the clear invitation for the actor to insert the irritating phrase "good news!" (*boni novi!*) at frequent intervals; but an inventive Zani could no doubt on the night dream up a few more suggestive vague double-entendres (perhaps considered unfit for print?) to prolong the agony even further, provided that the eventual scream in speech 156 of "What did she say about my message?" ("*Che te hala detto de' fatti me?*") was accepted by both performers as a signal to pass on to the dénouement.

The whole sketch, then, appears as a flexible succession of 'elastic gags', if I may coin this piece of jargon; and I am suggesting now that such recognisable units are a sign of improvisation technique, of a mode of performance in which an actor's existing repertoire of jokes, long and short, can be adapted and inserted into any plot with which they do not actually clash. Moreover it becomes apparent that the memorised units need not be restricted to 'jokes' as such, but can be used also for chunks of dialogue which – although made as funny as possible – also have the ability to advance the plot or convey information. The more limited and stereotyped the plots and situations used, the more they can be constructed out of such functional units already in the repertoire. The hypothesis is that these techniques were developed first of all by illiterate performers, and then applied to the new 'erudite' material when *commedia*

dell'arte as we now understand it first began to take shape. When the acting profession ceased to be illiterate, as it did rapidly in the sixteenth century, then the mental memory bank was replaced by the personal *libri generici*, written collections of useful and transposeable material which we know actors kept and collected right down to the time of Goldoni.

The mention of *libri generici* demonstrates that our analysis is perfectly compatible with what has been known and proposed so far about methods of improvisation adopted by *arte* profesionals. At the same time, I am proposing a slight modification to the picture presented, for example, by Tessari in his crucial fifth chapter on "Costruzione dello spettacolo" (1984, 75-95). Tessari makes it clear, with good evidence from the documents, that 'improvisation' for these actors did not imply walking on stage with nothing prepared and saying whatever words came into their heads. It is now commonly accepted that each *arte* performer had a stock of prepared material which suited his or her role and could be adapted for the plot currently being presented. In dealing with the concept of *generici*, Tessari in effect concentrates on set speeches prepared one at a time to suit recurrent situations, and he argues that the *generico* of the actor corresponded closely to the rhetorical *topos* of the poet. He seems to perceive this process as applying only to a set monologue, or to a single speech by one of the partners in a dialogue. An analysis of Pandolfi's anonymous *Dialogo* suggests that there were also commonplace routines which could be developed for two speakers, and that one can extend the range of *generici* beyond solo work and solo preparation. Tessari also draws a sharp distinction between *generici* (essentially verbal) and *lazzi* (which could be any combination of verbal, gestural and scenic) (1984, 86-95) In his anaylsis, whereas *generici* are verbal units open to constant re-working, *lazzi* are seen as fixed unalterable routines:

> Unlike the *generico*, which is open to indefinite development, and is functional upon the evolving demands of the plot, [the *lazzo*] is a scenic moment which is an end in itself, closed in its own jocular indifference, independent of the story and planted within it as a gratuitous variation, on the lines of modern comic 'gags'. (91; translation mine.)

Having looked at our anonymous *Dialogo*, it now seems hard to distinguish between the 'open' *generico* and the 'closed' *lazzo*, and even between what is 'functional' and what is 'gratuitous'. The one thing which is clear is that the units of dialogue, whether *generici* or *lazzi*, provide a modular structure for the scene – the passion for classifying the units themselves, and for giving them distinctive 'lazzo' names, is one that would have developed later than the sixteenth century, at a moment when the professional theatre was more institutionalised and its arteries were beginning to harden.

If this modular dialogue structure, not too hard to identify once you start looking for it, really comes from the professional improvisers, then we would expect not to find it recorded in Italian literary comedies written before the 1540s, which was the decade when the *arte* companies performing the new material first appear properly documented. In my judgement this is in fact the case: earlier Humanist playwrights do not use modular structure or the elastic gag. Writers with a literary training avoided circularity and repetition, which to them appeared as literary faults. They wanted their comedies to perform well, but also to read well. The professional buffoon did not expect his material ever to be read, and he knew that repetitive and even silly material can work beautifully in the third dimension of performance.

After 1540, however, I would claim that modualr structure, with elastic gags, does creep into the text of some written comedies, although in Italy the two genres remained separate for most of the time. (In France, as we shall see, it was to be another matter.) The earliest example I have found is in Aretino's *Talanta* of 1542.[3] This comedy was mounted in Venice by an aristocratic club, a Compagnia della Calza – a uniquely Venetian form of aristocratic society in which each single Compagnia was a group of friends from a single generation, and each named group died out with its members. For a spectacle of this sort, the normal assumption is that the parts would have been played by gentlemen amateurs who belonged to the Compagnia.

3 Italian text in Aretino, ed. Petrocchi 1971. There is a full English translation of *La Talanta* by Christopher Cairns in his edition of 1991. I have used my own translations in the present essay.

La Talanta is a leisurely play, in that the story line only takes up about a third of the time, the remainder bieng spent on set pieces: rhetorical monologues, discussions, games and practical jokes. We are not dealing with *commedia dell'arte* here, because we have a written text; and yet the fragmentation of the spectacle is in some ways reminiscent of what we see in scenarios fifty years or so later. The characters include a ridiculous old Venetian, a blustering Capitan Tinca, and a crowd of scurrilous servants, all possible precursors of *arte* masks. The braggart captain in particular has a scene or two all to himself, in which he has nothing to do except to be funny in a suitable and characteristic manner; and 3.12 is a good example – I offer a translated extract from it as Appendix B. Tinca is accompanied, like many comics, by a feed man: his parasite Branca, whose function is to flatter him, encourage him to greater heights of idiocy, and to wink at the audience at the same time. Some of their exchanges, when one examines them, are clearly elastic gags, where the actors just find as many different ways as they can of saying the same thing. (Again, in the Appendix, I have underlined this tendency by separating dialogue units with asterisks.) There is a sequence from "Meaning me?" to "Yes, my Captain"; a second from "It shall be done" to "Consider it already done"; and a third, longer and even more ludicrously repetitive as follows:

Tinca Sarà ella cosí?
Branca Del chiaro.
Tinca Credilo tu?
Branca Senza dubbio.
Tinca Riuscirammi?
Branca Al fermo.
Tinca Come lo desidero?
Branca Né piú, né meno.
Tinca E secondo ch'io spero?
Branca Di bel punto.

[Tinca Will it be so? / Branca Inevitably. / Tinca You think so? / Branca Undoubtedly. / Tinca Will it work? / Branca Absolutely. / Tinca As I desire? / Branca No more, no less. / Tinca According to my hopes? / Branca Spot on.]

"Di bel punto", if this were in fact an improvised scene, could be identified by the actors as the cue line.

Immediately after that, there is a variation which uses 'elastic' modular structure not just for wordplay, but to organise the physical skills which are so often regarded as characteristic of *commedia dell'arte*. Starting with "I could help them on their way . . .", Tinca launches into a demonstration of his terrifying fencing abilities, which involve not only grotesque attitudes with the sword, but wild leaps, somersaults, spitting and lewd gestures. This passage too could be prolonged according to the versatility of the actor playing Tinca – only this time we are speaking of acrobatic clowning. One distorted posture or action follows another, and Branca simply has to punctuate them with a new expression of sycophantic amazement each time.

How did Aretino come to write this dialogue in a modular format, when none of his predecessors among literary playwrights had used the same technique? Was he influenced by watching professional comedians? Was he even writing this scene *for* professionals, and adapting the dialogue to their already entrenched habits and routines? It is in fact hard to conceive of a gentlemanly dilettante member of the Compagnia dei Sempiterni lowering his dignity to the extent of somersaulting and grimacing round the stage. Such a performance would seem to cross the line drawn by Castiglione, for example, il *Il libro del Cortegiano*,[4] between the witty mimicry proper to a gentleman and the clowning proper to a lower-class buffoon. One begins to speculate whether *La Talanta* might have been mounted by a mixed cast of amateurs and professionals, with the latter taking the more undignified roles such as Tinca and perhaps some of the servants. In Venice in particular, more than in other Italian centres, such collaboration across class boundaries was already traditional in civic spectacle and pageant. Influenced by the actors who were to perform Tinca and Branca, Aretino has written in a more improvisatory style.

This scene, then, might be an early case where the structures which spring from improvisation are imported into a written script,

4 B. Castiglione: *Il libro del cortegiano*, Book 2 chapter 50. The whole section on jokes and humour in Book 2 is delivered in the fictional dialogue by Bibbiena, author of the comedy *Calandra*.

and thus become frozen on the page. It is not enough by itself to establish our argument. To pursue the thesis properly one needs to read extensively in Italian comedies after 1545, and see whether there is any correlation between the use of modular structures on the one hand, and some demonstrable link with *commedia dell'arte* on the other. That is a task still to be approached; already it seems that the pattern is not going to be simple or predictable. One does not necessarily find modular structure in what by other criteria would seem to be the obvious places: not very often (though sometimes) in the multi-dialect Venetian plays by Calmo, Dolce and Giancarli which are so frequently cited as antecedents to the *arte*; not necessarily in all the later plays which we know were composed by professional actors. The contrasting demands of literary models and of non-literary practice seem, after a first survey, to result in a complex rather than a simple picture.

There is, however, one body of writing which has overt links with *commedia dell'arte*, and which also provides a plentiful supply of modular or suspense-based scenes. I refer to the group of comedies now designated by critics (for some imponderable reason) as *commedia ridicolosa.*[5] (Kathleen Lea, with her usual acumen, identified this body of material long ago in her *Italian Popular Comedy*,[6] before this label was attached to it).These are fully scripted plays, written by amateurs for amateur performance mainly in or near Rome, printed between about 1605 and 1630. The most popular authors, in the sense of those whose plays were most often reprinted, are Giovanni Briccio (1579-1645) and Virgilio Verucci (1586-1650). The link with professional theatre comes on a secondary level from a proliferation in these scripts of regional dialects and accents (one of Verucci's plays is actually entitled *Li diversi linguaggi*); and on a primary level because the main characters tend to be Pantalone, Zanni, Dottor Graziano, Franceschina, various Capitani and young lovers, plus a few other stereotypes of more local interest. The accepted view of these plays is that their authors and performers

5 See Mariti 1978, which contains a study of the genre and the full texts of five comedies.

6 Lea 1934. Her Appendix B in vol. 2, 462-73 lists a number of relevant plays.

wanted to reproduce something like the *commedia dell'arte* experience in private performances among friends (or in amateur Academies), but lacked the ability to improvise with confidence, and so needed the support of a fully written script.

Although *commedie ridicolose* do not consist in every scene of a modular sequence of elastic gags, such a structure appears or is hinted at with very much greater frequency than in any other Italian comedies which I have examined. In addition, there is evidence of whole scenes and dialogue structures being transported from one play to another, as we would expect in a genuine *arte* repertoire. More significant still, a number of scenes, plot elements, structures and devices recur forty years later in the works of Molière, and thus become evidence of improvisation techniques being transported to a non-Italian dramatic culture. The concept of a modular structure with repetitive units does in fact cast a new light on many well-known features of Molière's scene building, which up to now have been analysed in different terms.[7] What is more, a full study of Briccio, Verucci and Molière together would enable us to put together a short list of typical situations, confrontations and formats of dialogue on which all three writers seem to have drawn as a common sources;[8] and where modular 'elastic' repetition can be particularly useful in stretching out a scene and gaining the maximum number of laughs. We can look briefly at some examples.

Our Magnifico-Zani dialogue taught us that one of the most obvious purposes of the modular game can be to delay something or create suspense. The event which is being delayed can be the most banal thing imaginable, such as the opening of a door to let someone in or out. An unimportant action is made important simply because it is put off for so long; an event which is not funny when it happens can be made hilarious because of a build-up of time during which it does not happen. In one of Giovanni Briccio's plays (*Pantalone imbertonao*, 1.4),[9] the young master Tiburzio wants

7 I have pursued this fact since in Andrews 1989, 41-76; Andrews 2005, 444-63; Andrews 2006, 121-39; and in essay no. 11 in the present volume.

8 More recently, Claude Bourqui (1999), has accepted many links between scenes in Molière and in *commedia ridicolosa*.

9 Briccio 1617. The play was printed nine times, in three-act and five-act versions, sometimes with the title *Pantalone innamorato*.

Zanni to come down and let him into the house. But Zanni is having a meal, and puts off moving for "just one more mouthful . . . just one more glass of wine . . .", reflecting what was obviously an elastic sequence in potential or in origin. Tiburzio, of course, gets furious, and eventually picks up a stick. But then Zanni does not want to open the door because he is afraid of being beaten, and there is a new elastic delaying sequence with Zanni saying "Promise you won't hit me . . .?" and Tiburzio trying to convince him that indeed he won't. When Zanni finally does open the door, he does of course get beaten, as the audience anticipated all along.

In Molière's *L'École des femmes* (1.2), there are two servants to open the door to their master Arnolphe. To start with neither of them can be bothered, and the elastic repetitions are of the 'You go – No, *you* go' variety, with fatuous excuses. Then Arnolphe threatens to starve them as a punishment, so they start falling over each other to open the door, and the contest between them to avoid blame causes more delays. The simple interposition of a door between two characters seems to provide endless opportunities for such games; and in the realm of English Renaissance theatre my mind moves to the sequence in *The Comedy of Errors* (3.1), when the men separated by the door are the twin Dromios. However, it is hard to detect a modular or elastic structure in the Shakespearean dialogue.

A different but equally fruitful opportunity is given by the reading through of a document on stage, detail by detail (one thinks of the Marx Brothers' sequence on "The party of the first part . . ." from *A Night at the Opera*). In the plots of *commedia ridicolosa*, the most frequent excuse for this was the contracting of a dowry, usually for an inappropriate marriage which would later be foiled by the true lovers. The easiest way to prolong the occasion was to give the job of marriage broker to the pseudo-intellectual Dottor Graziano. By the 1620s, the Doctor's mind-boggling combination of low Bolognese dialect and bad Latin had turned his language to complete gibberish, with overtones wherever possible of monstrosity and double-entendre. As he pieced his way painfully through reading the dowry contract, sentence by sentence, each impossible item of property had to be translated back into its proper sense by the other characters on stage. So (to fudge up English equivalents, but with some Italian originals in mind) we would first be given:

> 'One lousy farthing for an awkward haddock with pox',

which would need then to be reinterpreted into:

> 'One house and garden with an orchard, paddock and copse';

and when informed that

> 'Nick wet the bed milking Persians for Mother Eileen',

the exasperated Pantalone would have to look at the document himself, to discover

> 'Six sets of red silken curtains and another in green'.

The details of a sequence like this would have to be memorised by all parties, rather than entrusted to spontaneous invention (as was made all too clear by the experience of trying to compose the above examples), but once memorised the scene could be inserted into most plots. Giovanni Briccio used it in at least two of his scripts (*La dispettosa moglie*, 2.3;[10] *Pantalone imbertonao*, 3.4), with as many as twenty-one different twisting *storpiature* to prolong the scene: though he was still literary-minded enough to want to compose fresh sets of scripted distortions for each different play. Molière does not quite repeat the device in the form of a document – though one wonders about the ancestry of the loan agreement which is pored over in *L'Avare*, 2.1. However, in his early farce *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* (scenes 2 and 4) he shows clearly how the Doctor's pointless farragoes had become a delaying device in the farce repertoire: the Docteur in that play has no part in the story at all, but holds up the action to the point of exasperation with a series of pedantic interjections.[11]

Another process of dialogue which fits comfortably into the mould of repetitive improvisation is the working through of a list of alternatives, which can be made as long or as short as necessary. In Briccio and Verucci I have identified such leisurely reviews on subjects like what to do next (*Pantalone imbertonao*, 4.4); the sources of pleasure in human life (*Pantalone imbertonao*, 1.1); the

10 See Briccio 1606.

11 Part of this text is quoted in my essay, no. 11 in this present volume.

virtues which can be detected in a prospective bride (*La dispettosa moglie*, 2.4); and alternative places where Zanni might go to hide (*Li diversi linguaggi*, 5.1[12]). But the most typical list to pass in review is a list of people, better still a list of suitors for the hand of a son or daughter in the early scene of a comedy where a parent is broaching the subject of marriage for the first time. In Briccio's *La dispettosa moglie* the same structure is used in two successive scenes (1.2 and 1.3): the father works through a list of possible candidates, the son or daughter finds a diplomatic reason for rejecting each in turn, until the person already favoured by the young person is mentioned and modestly accepted. The same pattern of working through a list is adaptable to scenes of gossip, and exploited in a sophisticated way by Molière in *Le Misanthrope* (2.5); but, staying with the idea of a list of suitors, should we not take a new look at Portia and Nerissa surveying and deriding their candidates one by one in *The Merchant of Venice*'s 1.2?[13]

The confrontation between parent and offspring over a marriage proposal is a scene so often needed in these plays that it can support a number of different repertoire treatments, many of them modular and repetitive. The last example that there is space for here is from Verucci's *Li diversi linguaggi*, 3.1. This lengthy scene falls into a whole series of identifiable modular sections. To start with, we have the traditional confrontation between father Pantalone (speaking Venetian) and daughter Lavinia (in more standard 'Tuscan' Italian), about whom she is to marry:

PANTALONE . . . Che distu Lavinia? estu ancora risolua? Insomma ti l'hai da tior.
LAVINIA Io vi ho detto che non lo voglio, e ve llo ridico di bel novo.
PANTALONE E mi tel farò piar.
LAVINIA E io non lo farò mai.
PANTALONE E mi tel farò far per forza.
LAVINIA E dirò sempre che non lo voglio.
PANTALONE Co' farastu de manco?

12 Verucci 1609. The full text of this play's second edition (1627) is reproduced in the Mariti volume.

13 I have taken this 'new look' in my essay, no. 11 in this present volume.

> [PANTALONE . . . Well then Lavinia? Have you made up your mind? / Come on now, you've got to accept him. / LAVINIA I've told you I don't want him, and I'm telling you again. / PANTALONE And I'm going to make you have him. / LAVINIA And I shall never have him. / PANTALONE You'll do as I damn well say. / LAVINIA I'll go on saying I won't have him. / PANTALONE What else can you do?]

This is perhaps the most basic format imaginable, in any plot or situation: a plain disagreement or quarrel, in which one party says "Shall" and the other says "Shan't", backwards and forwards *ad nauseam.* The sequence quoted above is already the second appearance in 3.1 of the same routine. The two short exchanges are punctuated by sets of longer speeches in symmetrical patterns: Pantalone and Lavinia argue their cases at more length, as in a formal debate, Witnessing all this, their servant Zanni solemnly agrees with each of them in turn. Symmetry, as well as repetition, can provide a modular pattern and be a support in improvising dialogue without risk of losing one's way.

At this point, Zanni breaks in and tries to arbitrate (using his stage version of Bergamask dialect). He approaches father and daughter in turn – each of them promises him payment in food and drink if he can persuade the other to give in. This sequence is also symmetrical: father and daughter stand on opposite sides of the stage, Zanni bargains with each one of them in mirror-image exchanges, and gets appointed as their go-between. Both parties remain adamant; but Zanni pretends that they have come to an agreement:

> ZANNI . . . Desim un poghettin vu, messir Pantalon: non volí che la tolga per marit quel messir Claudio franzes?
>
> PANTALONE Messersí che voio che la tiolga.
>
> ZANNI E vu, segnura Lavinia, non desí che non volí quel vecchiazz che se domanda messir Claudii?
>
> LAVINIA Cosí dico sempre e mi contento che tu tratti per me con mio padre.
>
> ZANNI Mo donca siv d'accordo, e poi ste a contrastar sensa proposit! Orsus, fasí mo la pas, accostéve insem. Oh, vedí mo se mi ve ho tolte de mezz tutte le diferenzie?

> [ZANNI . . . Right! (*Goes to Pantalone*) Now tell me a moment, Pantalone, sir, isn't it true that you want her to take Messer Claudio

> the Frenchman for her husband? / PANTALONE That's right, I want her to take him. / ZANNI (*Goes to Lavinia*) And you, my lady Lavinia, did you not say that you do not want that old idiot who goes by the name of Messer Claudio? / LAVINIA That is what I shall always say, and I'm happy for you to negotiate for me with my father. / ZANNI (*Centre stage*) Well then – you're both agreed, and you've been quarrelling about nothing. Come now, step forward and make peace. Didn't I say that I'd solve your differences?]

This text as printed is very brief – but it is easy to imagine how the routine could be prolonged if it were improvised. Instead of visiting each side just once, Zanni can tramp backwards and forwards as often as he likes, pretending that he is making progress but in fact making none at all. The dénouement, where Pantalone and Lavinia discover, with a double-take, that neither of them has given any ground at all, is a comfortable safety-net into which professional actors developing an analogous scene could drop whenever they were ready; and the scene closes with a repetition of the (potentially endless) 'Shall/Shan't' routine with which it began:

> PANTALONE Davero Zuanne che me par che ti abbi fatto un miracolo. E ti, fia mia, podevi accordarte da prinzipio sensa metterghe tanti mezzani. Ti me hai fatto montar la colera sensa proposito.
>
> LAVINIA E anche voi, signor padre, come uomo di giudizio, lo potevate considerar dal primo che non era ben fatto di maritarmi a quel vecchio rimbambito. A che effetto ci avete voi voluto metter mezzani? Dovreste pur pensare che quel che io non fo per detto vostro, non lo farrei per detto di nessun altro.
>
> PANTALONE Come dir, ti te se' pentía? Ti te se' mudaa de proposito? Tu me burli? Ah, fia d'un castronazzo! ah meritricola! Ah, disubbidiente del tò messir padre! a sto muodo, an? Se metto man a sto pistolese, al sangue de mi che tel ficco tutto in messo de la panza.
>
> LAVINIA Fate pur quel che vi piace, ammazzatemi pure a vostra posta ch'io non lo vo' pigliare.
>
> PANTALONE E mi voio che ti el pii.
>
> LAVINIA E io non lo voglio.
>
> PANTALONE E ti l'hai da piar.
>
> LAVINIA Non sarà mai.

> [Pantalone Well I must say, Zanni, I think you've worked a miracle. Come now, daughter dear, you could have agreed from the start without having to use go-betweens. You made me lose my temper for no reason. / Lavinia And you too, father, as a man of judgement, you could have realised from the start that it wasn't proper to marry me to that decrepit old fool. Why did you need go-betweens to make peace? You ought to see that if I'm not going to do it because you say so, then I'm certainly not going to change my mind for other people. / Pantalone What? So this is your repentance? This is how you change your mind? Are you just playing jokes on me? You eunuch's child, you little harlot, you disobedient ungrateful girl! So that's how you go on! I've half a mind to take this dagger and stick it straight into your guts. / Lavinia Do what you like, kill me if you must, but I'm not going to have him. / Pantalone And I say you will take him. / Lavinia And I say I won't. / Pantalone You're going to have him. / Lavinia Never. (*Zanni drags them off stage unresolved*)]

A trio of experienced actors would need to do no more than remember a series of simple units or patterns, all of which they had followed many times before, and get them in the right order: the detailed words of the dialogue would emerge automatically. Decades later, those same units recur punctually in Molière's *L'Avare*, except that there they are spread over two different scenes. The direct confrontation between father and daughter occurs between Harpagon and Élise in 1.4; while the clumsy attempt by a servant to reconcile two quarrelling employers is used by Maître Jacques in 4.4 to negotiate between Harpagon and his son Cléante. There are in fact so many parallels in plot line and scene structure between *L'Avare* and *Li diversi linguaggi* that one would seriously propose the latter as a direct source for the former – were it not clear by now that we are dealing with a much more fluid theatrical tradition involving oral transmission, on which both authors could have drawn independently.

I hope that the examples included in this essay are enough to introduce the concepts of modular dialogue and the elastic gag, and also enough to open up a debate as to whether these concepts are plausible and applicable. In the context of possible links between Italian and English theatre, it must be hoped that scholars of English

will be able to comment on how helpful my proposals might be in tracing Italian influence, or perhaps just professional influence, on Elizabethan and Jacobean scripted theatre. It may prove that *commedia dell'arte* did not really manage to cross the channel as easily as it crossed the Alps. One remembers how Kathleen Lea set out in the 1930s to trace the influence of the *arte* in English theatre. She ended up by producing one of the best studies yet written of the Italian phenomenon itself; but the chapters in her second volume which actually deal with English material seem like a fragmentary appendix to what started as Volume I. We may have to conclude that as a matter of fact the direct influence of Italian professionals on the English theatre was in the end rather sparse.

As far as the present thesis is concerned, some limits should be set to its claims. It offers just one pice of detailed support for an already existing view of what the word 'improvisation' might have meant in concrete terms for the professional actor in *commedia dell'arte*. I am supporting the notion that 'improvisation' did not mean what it does now, in modern drama classes: it did not involve actors inventing their lines afresh for each evening's show. Rather, they played what amounted to jazz variations on a set of pre-rehearsed dialogue routines, taking a longer or a shorter route on each occasion of performance but always arriving at the same planned destination. But this modular pattern of dialogue cannot have contained the whole of their technique, nor can it constitute the only clue by which we can detect improvisation practice reflecting itself in a written script. For example, monologues and long speeches generally may need quite different tools of analysis. So may scenes involving larger numbers of people; though in this regard it is interesting to note the independent analysis which Tim Fitzpatrick has carried out on scenarios (1985).[14] He suggests that large groups of characters tended to coalesce into binary divisions, so that any given moment of a scene could be reduced to a two-sided confrontation. (This is a tendency which is surely confirmed by our last example from *Li diversi linguaggi*, where although three people are on stage, only two of them are verbally engaged at any one moment.) We must avoid claiming to have found a total solution,

14 Fitzpatrick's work was then expanded into a full monograph (1995).

and also resist the temptation to spend the rest of our academic careers on a manic hunt for elastic gags in every conceivable dramatic script. It remains true that to develop an eye for modular elastic structures causes one to read a number of familiar texts in quite a new light.

Appendix A

Dialogue between a Magnifico and Zani from Bergamo

Biblioteca Nazionale, Firenze: D. 4.6.23 n. 10. Rari incunabili palatini, Striscia 959).

The full text in Italian dialects is in V. Pandolfi: La commedia dell'arte. Storia e testi *(Florence: Sansoni, 1957), Vol. 1, pp. 174-7.*

[*The numbering of the speeches in this translation is an editorial addition, to facilitate cross-checking with the Italian dialect original, granted in particular that some sections have not been translated. Asterisks are also an editorial insertion, denoting a division between proposed units of improvisation.*]

[1] Magnifico Doesn't it give you a lift when you get a glimpse of a woman who is pretty, and seems to have possibilities? Especially when you have a certain weakness in these matters, like me. Yesterday I saw a superb-looking girl here on that balcony. I'd pay quite a lot for an hour or two of her attentions. But one has to make an approach, and my only contact seems to be Zani: I've seen him go into the house a couple of times. I'll call him and see what he can do. Zani!

[2] Zani (*Appearing in doorway, or at an upper window.*) Yes sir?

[3] Magnifico Come out a moment.

[4] Zani What can I do for you, boss?

[5] Magnifico Come out here a moment, my dear chap.

[6] Zani Me?

[7] Magnifico Thee.

[8] Zani You want me to come to thee?

[9] Magnifico Aye, thee, you donkey, get a move on.

[10] Zani At your service, as you see. Shall I wear my hat?

[11] Magnifico To hell with your hat, put your cap on.

[12] Zani Yes siree. Er . . . pardon me . . .

[13] Magnifico Now what?

[14] Zani You want me to come out?

[15] Magnifico Yes, you yourself.

[16] Zani Me myself in person?

[17] Magnifico *YES*, for God's sake, come out!

[18] Zani (*Finally emerging.*) I'm coming, I've arrived, I'm here, what can I do for Your Honour?

***

[19] Magnifico Come here, Zani. I want to talk to you about an affair of mine – but you mustn't breath a word of it to anyone.
[20] Zani No sir, shan't say a word.
[21] Magnifico I want you to know that I am in love.
[22] Zani In love?
[23] Magnifico Yes, I am in love.
[24] Zani In love?
[25] Magnifico Yes, idiot, don't you understand?
[26] Zani You really mean it?
[27] Magnifico Yes, I really mean it.
[28] Zani *You* are in *love*?
[29] Magnifico Yes, *I* am in *love.*
[30] Zani (*Collapses with laughter.*)
[31] Magnifico What are you laughing at, you clodhopper?
[32] Zani I thought you'd made a joke. You said you were in love.
[33] Magnifico But I *am* in love, that's what I said. What's the matter, don't I look like a man with normal drives?
[34] Zani Driving mules, more likely.
[35] Magnifico You cretinous bumpkin! I tell you the girl I am in love with is besotted on me. She's dying for it. She's seen what a fine figure of a man I am.

***

[36] Zani How do you know she fancies you?
[37] Magnifico How do I know?
[38] Zani Yes, how do you know?
[39] Magnifico I'll tell you how I know. When I look at her and she's up on her balcony, she looks back at me, and she laughs; and when I spit, she spits too. What more do you want?

***

[40] Zani But boss, she's sending you up.
[41] Magnifico She's sending me up?

[42] Zani Of course she's sending you up.
[43] Magnifico You don't know what you're talking about.
[44] Zani Oh, well.
Who is she, then?
[45] Magnifico The girl who lives in that house there.
[46] Zani The white one?
[47] Magnifico That's right.

***

[48] Zani And you're in love with *her*?
[49] Magnifico She's the one.
[50] Zani Then you've had it, boss – you're as good as dead.
[51] Magnifico Dead?
[52] Zani Dead, boss, you're dead.
[53] Magnifico But I'm perfectly alive, your dolt, what's all this about?
[54] Zani You're dead, boss.
[55] Magnifico Why am I dead?
[56] Zani Four brothers, all real hotheads, they'd clobber you as soon as look at you.

***

[57] Magnifico What do I care about her brothers? Anyway, how are they going to know?
[58] Zani It's a very risky business, boss.
[59] Magnifico Stop blethering, Zani, help me, and earn yourself a nice big tip.
[60] Zani What do I have to do?
[61] Magnifico I want you, Zani, to go to her house and speak to her on my behalf, and take her this sonnet that I wrote this morning. Just off the cuff, inspired by my love for her.
[62] Zani You want *me* to do all this poncing for *you*? And there's four brothers...?
[63] Magnifico Don't worry, Zani, trust me.
[64] Zani I don't want to hear any more – I'm not getting beaten up for anyone.
[65] Magnifico Zani – you can earn yourself a whole ducat!

[66] ZANI A whole ducat!
[67] MAGNIFICO A whole golden ducat.
[68] ZANI Like I said, you can rely on me, boss.

***

[93] MAGNIFICO Here's the ducat. And here's the sonnet.
[94] ZANI Is it by that poet, whatsisname, Petrarse?
[95] MAGNIFICO No, I told you, I wrote it myself off the cuff.
[96] ZANI Off the what?
[97] MAGNIFICO I just tossed it off.
[<97a] ZANI Disgusting.>[15]

***

[101] MAGNIFICO <Watch your tongue.> You've got to represent me now with gallantry and polish, and bring back her answer straight away. Mind you tell her all about my virtues and accomplishments.
[102] ZANI Say no more, boss.
[103] MAGNIFICO And how rich I am, and how generous, and how I'll set her up for life.
[104] ZANI What with?
[105] MAGNIFICO With all the property I possess, of course.
[106] ZANI Property my arse!
[107] MAGNIFICO What's the matter, aren't I a man of property? Haven't I got a house full of good things?
[108] ZANI A house full of cobwebs, more like: apart from them, there's room to hold a tournament there.
[109] MAGNIFICO Shh! Zani, don't say such things in public!
[110] ZANI (*quietly*) I'm not saying anything – (*loudly*) only that your house is full of rats. I've never seen anything else there.
[111] MAGNIFICO Shut your mouth! Please!
[112] ZANI 'Shut your mouth', he says. The rich man! Pathetic!
[113] MAGNIFICO What are you saying?
[114] ZANI Nothing. (*Louder*) That there's nothing in your house.

15 This line is not in the original. But it is an irresistible insertion.

***

[125] MAGNIFICO Listen, hooligan, are you going to earn that ducat, or are you going to give it back?
[126] ZANI Yes, yes, boss, I'm going.
[127] MAGNIFICO Right. Forget the humorous remarks, and go and do what I told you.
(*Zani goes into the girl's house, and the Magnifico into his own. After a while – or in a separate later scene – the Magnifico re-emerges.*)
[128] MAGNIFICO That lout is still keeping me waiting for her answer. He could have walked sixteen miles in the time he's been gone. God, how I detest waiting, don't you? Especially for a woman.
[129] ZANI (*Enters, singing.*)
'Water from the overflow
Trickling down the flue.
Stick the wench upon the bench,
And sod you too'.
[130] MAGNIFICO Here he comes. God, what a song!
[131] ZANI Evening, boss!
[132] MAGNIFICO Where the hell have you been, blast you?
[133] ZANI Good news, boss! I've been there.
[134] MAGNIFICO You've been where?
[135] ZANI To see your lady friend. Good news!
[136] MAGNIFICO Really?
[137] ZANI Really, boss.
[138] MAGNIFICO My dear old chap, come on now, give me some consolation, give me some relief!
[139] ZANI Boss, I was in there talking to her for ages.
[140] MAGNIFICO Splendid! And what did she say about me?
[141] ZANI She's so polite, so accommodating, so friendly.
[142] MAGNIFICO Yes indeed, she's got all the graces. What did she say about me?
[143] ZANI She gave me an enormous hunk of cheese.
[144] MAGNIFICO Get to the point, man, tell me what she thought of the sonnet, and what her answer was.
[145] ZANI She gave me some fresh, white bread.
[146] MAGNIFICO Do you want me to burst? You can tell me all

those things later – put me out of my misery, tell me about the sonnet.

[147] ZANI Yes boss, just a minute boss, good news! She wanted it, you know sir, she really wanted it.

[148] MAGNIFICO Wanted *WHAT*?

[149] ZANI She took hold of my hand, and she wanted me to touch her on her rosette.

[150] MAGNIFICO On her what? Her rosette?

[151] ZANI Oh yes, boss (*laughing*) . . . and she wanted me to stick two buttons on it.

[152] MAGNIFICO What the hell is all this? What buttons? What rosette?

[153] ZANI Yes boss, you see, the rosette on the front of her bonnet, here. She wanted to give her two of my buttons, to stick on her rosette. It was a great favour.

[154] MAGNIFICO God rot you, you great buffoon, will you stop this gibbering and tell me what she said about me?

[155] ZANI Oh boss, she was smiling, she was happy, she was so kind to me, she said if I go back again she'll give me some cake.

[156] MAGNIFICO I don't think I can stand this much longer – I'm going to die. *WHAT DID SHE SAY ABOUT MY MESSAGE*?!

***

[157] ZANI About your message?

[158] MAGNIFICO Yes! About me!

[159] ZANI She didn't say anything about you, boss.

[160] MAGNIFICO What? Nothing? Well what did you say about me?

[161] ZANI I didn't say anything about you, boss.

[162] MAGNIFICO Didn't you take her my message?

[163] ZANI Oh boss, oh Jesus, oh hell and damnation, I completely forgot.

[164] MAGNIFICO You didn't give her my message?

[165] ZANI No boss, very sorry boss, I just forgot.

[166] MAGNIFICO What about my sonnet? Didn't you give her that either?

[167] ZANI The sonnet, boss? Er . . . no, boss. You see . . .

[168] MAGNIFICO What have you done with it?

[169] Zani Oh boss . . . well what I mean to say is...
[170] Magnifico What do you mean to say?
[171] Zani Very sorry, boss, honestly, please God you'll forgive me . . .
[172] Magnifico What have you done with the sonnet?
[173] Zani It's . . . here.
[174] Magnifico But it's all crumpled and messed up. What have you been doing with it?
[175] Zani Well you see, boss, it's like this you see, I used it to wrap up this fried fish that I bought . . .
[176] Magnifico You gangster! You murderer! You've ruined my chances!
[177] Zani It's not really so bad, boss, we can scrape the oil off with a knife, and you'll still be able to read it . . .
[178] Magnifico Dolt! Lout! Clodhopper! Get inside, you miserable cretin, and I'll . . .
[179] Zani No, boss! Please don't, boss! Please, boss! Help . . .!

Appendix B

Pietro Aretino, *La Talanta*

First performance and printing (Venice: Marcolini) 1542.

Act 3, scene 12

Tinca (Tench), a braggart Captain
Branca (Grab), his parasite

[Asterisks are an editorial insertion, denoting a division between proposed units of improvisation.]

Tinca Che le pare de la sbriccaría de gli sbricchi, che teme sino de la mia ombra?
Branca Ne stupisce non meno che si stupisca del credito che i bravi a credenza si usurpano del vostro nome, onde nel comparir uno di questi lasciami stare con le sue tàttere intorno, se gli dice soldato del Tinca.
Tinca Intendendosi però di me?
Branca Messer sí.
Tinca Di me proprio?
Branca Signor sí.
Tinca Di questo fusto?
Branca Capitan sí.

***

Tinca Trovami domattina un poeta che metta i miei fatti in canto, et un musico che gli ponga in rima.
Branca Faràssi.
Tinca Ti supplico.
Branca Fate conto che si faccia.
Tinca Sí, di grazia.
Branca È che di già sia fatto.

***

Tinca Io non so se tu trapani nel secreto del mio intendimento.
Branca Lo foracchio pelle pelle.
Tinca Diròtti: il sentirsi et in cronica et in figurato de le mie faccende

è per causar due effetti: l'uno tirerà ad adorarmi la Dea solita e le Dee insolite, e l'altro spaventerà non pur gli innamorati di lei e de l'altre, ma tutti quegli che ardissero d'innamorarsi e de l'altre e di lei.

BRANCA Onde venite ad inferire che rimarrete signor del campo.

TINCA Tu l'hai.

BRANCA Oh, che stratagemma!

TINCA Noi sfodereremo de' maggiori per sanità.

BRANCA I gallinelli andranno a spasso barbine, puntaluzzi, medagline e ricametti, in là.

***

TINCA Sarà ella cosí?

BRANCA Del chiaro.

TINCA Credilo tu?

BRANCA Senza dubbio.

TINCA Riuscirammi?

BRANCA Al fermo.

TINCA Come lo desidero?

BRANCA Né piú, né meno.

TINCA E secondo ch'io spero?

BRANCA Di bel punto.

* * *

TINCA Ecco, poi che egli è cosí, che io saprei trivellare un punto di questa tacca.

BRANCA Bello.

TINCA Spicando un salto di cotal fatta.

BRANCA Buono.

TINCA Facendo un capitòmolo in simil modo.

BRANCA Bene.

TINCA Sputando nel mostaccio de' poltroncioni a cotal foggia.

BRANCA Galante.

TINCA Recandomi con lo stocco in questa guardia.

BRANCA Bisogna nascerci.

TINCA Facendo a' miei nemici di tal maniera fica in su gli occhi.

BRANCA Non ne sarà mai piú.

TINCA Mi do ad intendere che tu lo possa, non che altro, giurare
BRANCA Armorum, et cetera.
TINCA Che vuol dire armorum et cetera?
BRANCA Non so sí volgarizzarlo.

***

TINCA What does she think of the knavery of those knaves who shiver at the very sight of my shadow?
BRANCA She is no less amazed by that, than she is amazed at the false credits which false bullies usurp for themselves by using your name as collateral – so that now every passing hands-off swaggerer hung around with ironmongery has the name of 'one of Tinca's soldiers'.
TINCA Meaning me, that is?
BRANCA Yes sir.
TINCA Me myself?
BRANCA Yes, chief.
TINCA In the flesh?
BRANCA Yes, my Captain.

***

TINCA Tomorrow you must find me a poet who can put my exploits into music, and a musician who can set them to verse.
BRANCA It shall be done.
TINCA If you please.
BRANCA You can rely on me.
TINCA I should be most grateful.
BRANCA Consider it already done.

***

TINCA I don't know whether you are managing to drill through to the core of my stratagem?
BRANCA I think I may be scratching at its surface.
TINCA I shall tell you. The immortalisation of my deeds in figured chronicle should be the cause of two effects: on the one hand it will bring upon me the adoration of the aforementioned Goddess and of others afore unmentioned; on the other hand

it will instil panic not only in the present suitors of her, and of others, but in anyone who should dare in the future to fall in love with others, or with her.

BRANCA By which you infer that you will be left master of the field.

TINCA You have it.

BRANCA Masterly tactics!

TINCA We shall unsheath yet more robust devices in due course.

BRANCA All the ponced-up young turkey-cocks will run for cover – dimples, downy cheeks, dingle-dangles, lacy doublets and all!

***

TINCA Will it be so?

BRANCA Inevitably.

TINCA You think so?

BRANCA Undoubtedly.

TINCA Will it work?

BRANCA Absolutely.

TINCA As I desire?

BRANCA No more, no less.

TINCA According to my hopes?

BRANCA Spot on.

***

TINCA And I could help them on their way by skewering them with a thrust – thus!

BRANCA Brilliant!

TINCA Giving at the same time a terrifying leap – like so!

BRANCA Incredible!

TINCA And with a somersault – thiswise!

BRANCA Bravo!

TINCA And spitting in their cowardly faces – like that!

BRANCA Elegant stuff!

TINCA Assuming with my rapier . . . *this* menacing stance!

BRANCA There are some talents one just has to be born with.

TINCA And giving the fig sign right under their noses – so!

BRANCA You're in a class of your own.

TINCA If you swore that, no one would contradict you.

Branca *Armorum, et cetera.* (*Raising his hand to swear?*)
Tinca What does that mean?
Branca It's a bit hard to translate.
. . .

All translations are by Richard Andrews.

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5

Levels of Orality in the Published Scenarios of Flaminio Scala

The act of assessing a balance between inputs into a text which may be classifed as 'oral' or 'written' assumes on the face of it a single fixed polarity. At one extreme, a text written to be read off the page, probably silently, by one reader at a time; at the other extreme, a text intended to be delivered aloud to some kind of audience. The underlying assumption is that certain internal characteristics of a text – features such as vocabulary and syntax, even sometimes punctuation – will show qualities which reflect whether it belongs to 'oral culture', to 'written culture', or to some kind of overlap between the two. In practice, these analyses have rarely been applied to texts composed for theatrical recitation – the scripts of plays, or more fragmentary speeches and sketches. There is a special status which can be applied to texts which were composed from the start in order to be the basis for an oral performance. (A different set of questions would apply to an attempt to transcribe onto the page a text which started as a performance, or as some other type of oral delivery).

An even more special status is possessed by a class of text which is probably peculiar to the early modern period, and to Italy – the scenario (or *canovaccio*, or *soggetto*) which was regularly put together by professional theatre companies. Unexpectedly, perhaps, these documents are hard to classify as 'oral texts'. Most of the time – though we shall see some exceptions below – they expressly do not contain words which are intended to be spoken by actors. It is the actors themselves who are expected to provide those words – partly from their *ad hoc* imagination, but most of all from the repertoire of speeches and phrases which each of them has developed independently, and which they already carry round in their heads. One could almost say, paradoxically, that the nature

of a scenario is to be a deliberate absence of text: it offers a narrative frame with a series of blank opportunities, empty spaces into which spoken words (or sometimes non-verbal gestures or actions) should be inserted. The words of the scenario itself have the quality of a technical manual, of a set of instructions: it says things like "in questo, il Capitano brava" (At this point, the Capitano rants), or "Isabella si lamenta" (Isabella laments), or "Zani fa i suoi lazzi" (Zani does his gags). The relevant actor knows what those terms mean, and applies her or his acquired artisan skill. The vocabulary used in scenarios is always the same; the actor adapts the instruction each time to different circumstances. The text is not very different from that of a car service manual saying "Next, drain the oil from the sump", or "Clean the sparking plugs". An untrained reader may not know how to do these things; but a trained mechanic does not need to be told anything more, and responds – also *ad hoc* – to the condition of the individual vehicle. We could ask if an instruction manual belongs to oral culture or to written culture v or to neither.

(In passing it could be remarked that all play scripts can be seen as "sets of instructions". Behind the text on the page which begins "To be or not to be, that is the question" lies an implicit stage direction: "The actor playing Hamlet must now speak these lines").

The great majority of scenarios which have survived are in manuscript collections.[1] Some of these – for example the one in the Correr library in Venice – may have been the repertoire of an identifiable acting company (see Alberti 1996). In that case, they were written just for actors to refer to. They did not aim to be intelligible to anyone outside the profession, or indeed outside a particular troupe. Indeed, the texts can be so scrappy, so sparse, so hastily written, as to leave us sometimes very unclear about what is being communicated. We can immediately address a typical example, in the form of the opening scenes from the scenario entitled *Intronati*, which is the last in the Correr collection. The Magnifico and Coviello are the two old fathers; Flaminia is the Magnifico's daughter; Orazio is in love with her; Zanni and Tartaglia are two servants. Emphases in bold type are my own.

1 For a complete list of those which survive, see the Bibliography in Andrews 2008, 321.

Magnifico vien dicendo a
Coviello la sua malinconia nascer da un figlio perso: alla fine **fanno un parentato doppio fra loro**, cioè se danno le figlie l'uno a l'altro e così d'acordo. Magnifico batte da
Zanni sente il tutto, **fa lazi** di burlar Coviello: loro bateno
Flaminia **sente il parentato, nega**; loro vogliano far tocar la mano per forza. **Zani li soi trionfi**; alla fine lei in casa, loro per strada.
Oratio vien dicendo a
Tartaglia l'odio di Flaminia e l'amor di Filice. **Tartaglia soi lazi.** Oratio non vol che se inomini più Flaminia, ma Filice. Alla fine manda Tartaglia al banco, **gli dice del paggio**. Tartaglia batte da
Filice, lui gli dice il suo amore, lei lo scacia et entra. Oratio si dole; alla fine manda al bancho Tartaglia, lui resta. (Emphasis addded)[2]

[Magnifico enters, telling
Coviello that his sadness comes from having lost his son. Eventually **they arrange a double match between them**, agreeing to marry each other's daughters. Magnifico knocks to summon
Zanni, who has heard it all, and **performs gags [*lazzi*]** in mockery of Coviello. They knock to call out
Flaminia: she **is told of the match, and refuses**. They try to get her to touch hands with Coviello[3] by force. **Zanni does his bits of bravado [*trionfi*]**. In the end, she goes indoors and the others exit along the street.
Orazio enters, telling
Tartaglia how he loathes Flaminia and is in love with Filice. **Tartaglia does his *lazzi*.** Orazio says he must never mention Flaminia, only Filice. In the end he sends Tartaglia to the market, **telling him about the page**. Tartaglia knocks to call
Filice: he [Orazio] tells her of his love, but she spurns him and goes

2 Venice, Biblioteca Correr, MS 1040, 135*v*-137*r*. The transcription is my own. We can assume that "alla vine" is an error for "alla fine".

3 The act of "touching hands" had of course a formal binding significance for betrothal or marriage rituals. See Klapisch-Zuber 1985, 178-212.

in. Orazio laments. In the end he sends Tartaglia to the market, and he stays.]

The opening conversation between the two *vecchi* is summarised as briefly as can be – mainly because so many other comedies, scripted or improvised, began with the two old fathers agreeing to marry each other's daughters: "fanno un parentato doppio fra loro" (they arrange a double marriage match between them). The actors already had all this dialogue firmly in their heads, including implausible boasts of sexual potency.[4] Zani the servant delivers "lazi", and then more aggressive or threatening "trionfi", taken out of his personal repertoire of gags and routines. Flaminia, like all daughters in comedy, vehemently refuses to marry her father's old friend Coviello – the words "sente il parentato, nega" (she is told of the match, and refuses) are enough for the actress to know what to do. Moving on, we might then just about deduce from Orazio's scene with his servant, that he used to be in love with Flaminia but now prefers Filice. But we shall grasp that more quickly if we know – as the actors certainly knew v that the whole plot is based on a very well-known and influential published comedy, the Sienese *Gl'ingannati* which first appeared in print in 1537. So when Orazio "gli dice del paggio" (tells him about the page), it means that Orazio needs a new page boy: in the second act of this scenario version, the post is going to be filled by Flaminia in male disguise, and she will be the equivalent of the character Lelia in the original play. This scenario text has the same status as the notes which we might take during a meeting for which we have to write the minutes. There are enough words and phrases to remind us what happened, and they were not intended to be read by anyone else.

Other manuscript collections may have been assembled with more care, for the amusement or interest of a private individual. The seventeenth-century Corsini collection in Rome has every single scenario illustrated with a special water-colour picture, which means that someone hoped to take some pleasure in looking at it.[5] But it was still not composed for a general public. Its verbal

4 See, for example, the opening scene of the anonymous Sienese *Gl'ingannati*, first perfomed in 1532, the play on which this scenario is based.

5 Rome, Biblioteca Corsiniana, MSS 45 G5 and 45 G6. Some textual

text is no more carefully or clearly written than the Correr one; so whoever assembled the collection might have copied the words from a pile of miscellaneous scribbles, again the property of an actor or a *capocomico*.

There is one set of scenario texts, however, which demands a more complex analysis. It is the only collection of scenarios ever put into print and offered for sale to general readers: Flaminio Scala's *Teatro delle favole rappresentative* of 1611.[6] There has been some discussion about the purposes which Scala had in mind in publishing this material.[7] But it is easy to show that, whatever Scala thought he was doing, the text he chose to issue differs stylistically and in other ways from what is found in the manuscript collections. These differences are likely, in most cases, to reflect the fact that the scenarios are being offered to a reading public, and not only to professional actors who might turn them back into a performance. Where that leaves the contents of Scala's volume, on a scale between 'oral' and 'written' culture, may be a more difficult question.

For Scala's normal approach to printing a scenario, we can peruse the opening of his scenario *La creduta morta*[8] (presented as 'Giornata', or 'Day', no. 7 – an echo of Boccaccio's *Decameron*):

> **Argomento**
> Abitava in Bologna un Gentilhuomo di buona famiglia e di virtuosi costumi ornato, il quale havendo una figliuola e desiderando quella con felice nodo di maritaggio a ben nato giovine congiungere, fra se stesso deliberò maritarla in altra parte, con persona la quale ne i negotii di mercatura era di lui rispondente. Ardeva la giovane di sviscerato amore per un giovine della sua medesima patria, chiamato Oratio, il quale oltre l'esser a lei di nobiltà e ricchezze uguale con iscambievole amore la giovane per moglie bramava, e, vedendo al suo desiderio solo la volontà del padre ostargli, accordato con la

examples (but none of the illustrations) are reproduced Testaverde 2007, 425-526.

6 Flaminio Scala 1611; modern edition by Marotti 1976. The 1967 translation by Henry F. Salerno is too inaccurate to be recommended.

7 See Andrews 2008 and Andrews 2006, 36-49.

8 This scenario is not included among the thirty reproduced in Andrews 2008.

giovane le diede **un sonnifero**, per lo quale ella, essendo creduta morta, venne sepolta, come nell'orditura del suggetto s'intenderà.

Bologna Città **Notte**

ATTO PRIMO

(Scena 1)
Orazio *Flavio* — **intende da Flavio suo amico il suo dolore esser cagionato dalla morte di Flaminia**, alla quale portava una certa honestissima affettione, ciò inteso compassiona lo stato suo, Flavio addolorato parte per strada, **Oratio l'amor di Flaminia** la quale per suo amore s'è finta morta, in quello

(Scena 2)
Pantal. *Gratian.* *Servi* — con Gra. et altri, i quali vengono d'accompagnar Flam. al sepolcro, **fanno parole di complimento tra di loro**, Pantal. in casa, Grat. co i servi parte per strada: **Orazio dice rincrescerli del dolore**, che sente il padre di Flaminia; in quello

(Scena 3)
Pedrol. — dice a Orazio haver' all'ordine il tutto, e quello, che si debbe far' di Flaminia, **Orazio che la conduca a casa sua**, Pedrol. li mostra le corde, & altri ordegni per cavar Flam. dal sepolcro, in quello

(Scena 4)
Flavio — arriva . . .[9]

[**Argument** There lived in Bologna a gentleman of good family and noble manners who, having a daughter and wishing to join her in a happy bond of marriage with a well-born young man, took the decision to marry her in another city, with a person who was linked to him in business affairs. The young lady was possessed with a burning love for a young man of her own city named Orazio, who, as well as being her equal in birth and riches, desired her as his wife with

9 Scala 1611, 23*v*-24*r*, transcribed from the copy in the Fellows' Library of Clare College, Cambridge, shelfmark I.7.21. My transcriptions from the original printing intervene only on punctuation (occasionally) and written accents, to make things clearer for a modern reader. I have also added (in square brackets) scene numbers, which Scala does not include, for ease of reference. All insertions of bold or italic type are my own.

a reciprocal passion and, seeing that the only obstacle to his desire was her father's wishes, gave to the young lady with her agreement a **sleeping draught**, through which she was believed to be dead, and so buried, as will be seen in what is outlined by this scenario.

Scene: Bologna **Night**

FIRST ACT

(Scene 1)
ORAZIO
FLAVIO
hears from his friend Flavio that his grief has been caused by the death of Flaminia, for whom he had feelings of honest affection; having heard this, he expresses sympathy for his state. Flavio, very sad, exits into town. **Orazio speaks of the love of Flaminia**, who has pretended to be dead for his sake; *next*

(Scene 2)
PANTAL.
GRAZIANO
SERVANTS
with Graziano and others, come from accompanying Flaminia to her tomb; **they exchange courteous speeches**. Pantalone goes into his house; Graziano exits into town with the servants. **Orazio says he is sorry for the grief** felt by Flaminia's father; *next*

(Scene 3)
PEDROLINO
tells Orazio that he has arranged everything, and asks what is to be done about Flaminia, **Orazio: that he should take her to his house**. Pedrolino shows him the ropes and other equipment for lifting Flaminia out of her tomb; *next*

(Scene 4)
FLAVIO
enters . . .]

The first significant thing to note is the existence of an *argomento*, a kind of summary to orient the reader: in some scenarios this includes a lengthy back story or *antefatto*, relating what has happened to the characters before they appear on stage. (We can note in passing that, as the terms *giornata* and *argomento* suggest, Scala was probably also trying to cater for readers who simply wanted to read his text to themselves or to use it as the basis of narration to others, as though his volume contained a set of short stories. However, in his usage a *giornata* is a single

story rather than a group of stories as in Boccaccio[10]). As far as scenarios are concerned, *argomenti* are unique to Scala's printed volume: none of the manuscript collections of *canovacci* from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries offers this kind of support. Here the important thing we learn from the *argomento* is that Flaminia, like Shakespeare's Juliet, has taken a sleeping draught (*un sonnifero*) – which makes her appear to be dead. Her funeral has already taken place.

The text of scene 1 is much clearer than most manuscript scenarios about exactly what the characters have to express. Nevertheless, the syntactic style is extremely terse, with repetitive variants on forms of indirect speech. The opening conversation, translated here as "Orazio hears from his friend Flavio that his grief has been caused by the death of Flaminia' is in the original "Orazio intende da Flavio suo amico *il suo dolore esser cagionato* dalla morte di Flaminia . . ." – a Latinate construction, accusative plus infinitive, which here gives an impression of summary brevity. The words "Orazio l'amor di Flaminia . . ." are a piece of telegraphese which it is impossible to present in a modern edition without the insertion of a verb or a colon (here: "Orazio speaks of the love of Flaminia"); and this is what has repeatedly been done, first by Marotti in his 1976 Italian transcription, then in my 2008 translations of other scenarios. All this is typical of Scala's style: it is not very elegant, but it is perfectly clear, and modern editorial intervention is limited to decisions about spelling and punctuation. On stage, the actors understand what they have to say, but are given no verbatim sentences to repeat. An 'absence of text', as we have remarked, into which actors have to insert text.

In scene 2, two families return from Flaminia's funeral, with mute servants present. "Fanno parole di complimento tra di loro" (they exchange courteous speeches), means that the actors just reproduce what their equivalents would say in normal social interchange after a funeral – again with no need for words to be supplied, not even in a form of indirect speech. "Orazio dice rincrescerli del dolore . . ." (Orazio says he is sorry for the grief . . .)

10 For a fuller discussion of the multiple purposes of Scala's volume, see Andrews 2006, 43-4.

is again a Latinate construction which in this case does marginally reduce the word length.

In scene 3, we have another piece of telegraphese, “Orazio che la conduca a casa sua” (Orazio: that he should take her to his house), requiring at least a colon from a modern editor. Meanwhile what Pedrolino had to say about getting Flaminia out of her tomb makes sense to us on the page if we have read the *argomento*; but on stage the details of this *antefatto* must be conveyed for the first time to the audience by Pedrolino and Orazio between them, in words which they have to provide.

The vast majority of Scala’s scenario scenes work in this way. They cause no problems for the reader – especially since we have the help of an *argomento* – and they present no difficulty either for trained actors who want to try turning a *canovaccio* back into a play performance. But the position of these texts on a theoretical scale between ‘oral’ and ‘written’ is hard to determine. They suggest or invite orality – they even demand an oral input in order to fulfil their function – but they do not contain anything with a directly oral character.

We would seem, then, to have identified a ‘normal’ or ‘default’ mode for the language of scenarios, or at least for Flaminio Scala in particular; and indeed the vast majority of his texts do fit into the quite simple pattern described. But there are moments when Scala diverges from the format. In these unique printed scenarios, the compiler sometimes feels forced to break the normal compositional mode by inserting some words which an actor is instructed to repeat in full. In other words, at a few specific moments, Scala’s scenarios briefly turn into play scripts. Sometimes these insertions are short: they may be verbatim quotations from a letter to be read out, or quick one-line jokes around which further action is then built. But there are two types of examples which are rather more extensive than that, and they have a freakish interest precisely because they are so exceptional.

The scenario entitled *Il vecchio geloso*, Giornata 6[11], tells a very Boccaccian story of the young wife Isabella cheating her old husband Pantalone with a young lover Orazio. (Despite some

11 Full translation of this scenario in Andrews 2008, 31-40.

people's unthinking stereotypes, this adultery plot is unusual for Italian stage comedy of this period: it is certainly the only tale of this kind in Scala's collection of forty comic scenarios.) The play is so self-consciously Boccaccian, in fact, that in the third scene of act 1 Dottor Graziano is begged by the rest of the company to tell a story – "raccontare qualche novella". The text says that "alla fine racconta quella novella di Boccaccio detta . . ." (in the end he tells that Boccaccio story which is called . . .), but the title is left as a blank space in the 1611 printing, as if Scala or his printer had intended to go back and identify it but had then forgotten to do so.

At the end of act 2 of this scenario, Isabella closets herself with Orazio inside a house, and Pantalone stands guard over them under the illusion that his wife is in there alone fulfilling a bodily need:

> (Scena 13)
> Flaminia vorrebbe entrare in casa Pasqu. subito Pedrol. perché non disturbi Orazio, la invita a ballare: e cosí ogn'uno vorrebbe entrare in casa Pasquella per fare qualche servizio, e Pant. tien detto: **'*Di grazia, non andate a disturbar mia mogle, la quale fa un servitio*'.** Alla fine vien fuora . . . (21*v*-22*r*; emphasis added)
>
> (Scena 14)
> Isabella tutta sudata: Pant. subito la rasciuga col suo fazzoletto, **dicendoli che quando gli vengono quelle volontà**, **che se le cavi e non patisca**, tutti si levano dal ballo, per andare a diporto, e cosí s'incamminano, e Pant. gli seguita, **asciugando il viso a sua moglie** la quale fa della vergognosa, accarezzando suo marito, via, e finisce l'Atto Secondo. (Ibid.; emphasis added)
>
> [(Scene 13)
> Flaminia tries to get into Pasquella's house. Immediately Pedrolino, so she canno disturb Orazio, invites her to dance;and in this way everyone tries to get into Pasquella's house because they need to do something, and Pantalone keeps saying **'*Please don't go and disturb my wife, who has as necessity to attend to*'**. In the end there emerges . . .
>
> (Scene 14)
> Isabella all in a sweat. Pantalone immediately dries her with his handkerchief, **telling her that when these needs come upon her**

she should attend to them straight away, and not let herself get uncomfortable. Everyone leaves the dancing to go and enjoy themselves elsewhere, and so they set out, and Pantalone follows them, **wiping his wife's face**, while she behaves modestly, making a fuss of her husband, and they exit, and the Second Act ends.]

Thus we read of Pantalone fending off other people who want to enter the house, and Scala gives the precise words he must use (which I have put into bold italics). When Isabella emerges, "tutta sudata" (all in a sweat), Pantalone's words of concern for her are in Scala's more normal indirect speech: "dicendoli che quando gli vengono quelle volontà, che se le cavi e non patisca" (telling her that when these needs come upon her she should attend to them straight away, and not let herself get uncomfortable). But this indirect speech comes quite close, again, to giving a precise form of words; and for the audience those words amount to a salacious double-entendre about "needs" which need to be "attended to", a dramatic irony of which Pantalone is unaware.

I have put some chosen words into bold type for a particular reason: they are going to be taken up again quite explicitly later on in the scenario. At the climax of the play, the servant character Burattino has been reduced to exasperation and fury by a trick which has placed his wife in bed with Dottor Graziano. He knows quite well what Pantalone's wife has been doing, and he decides that one public cuckoldry deserves another. So in 3.11, he tells the story of what we know happened in act 2, as if it were a kind of *novella*, without quite mentioning any names:

(Scena 11)
. . . Buratt. domanda a Pantalone se, Graziano havendo usato con sua moglie, egli può esser chiamato becco; Pant. dice di sí. Allora Burattino udendo ciò dice: **'Signor Pantalone, sappia vostra Signoria ch'io non son solo, ma che vi sono de gli altri becchi, e non molto lontano'**: e di volerli raccontare quello, che è intervenuto ad un suo conoscente, *e narra come, ritrovandosi in Villa un vecchio geloso con sua moglie alla quale faceva vigilantissima guardia, avvenne che un giovane, che di lei innamorato viveva, né sapendo come goderla, trovò modo col mezo d'un suo servitore d'esser chiamato da un suo amico lontano da casa d'una donna sua amica*

aspettando quivi l'occasione e l'ordine con la donna dato: nacque in quel mentre voglia a le fanciulle della Villa di voler ballare, e cosí fatta bellissima radunata di donne e d'huomini ballarini, comiciòssi il ballo al suono di bonissimo strumento: e ballatosi alquanto, la moglie del detto vecchio geloso finse col marito di volere un suo servitio fare, alle cui parole trovandosi presente la donna che la casa al suo amante prestata haveva, con licenza del marito in casa sua la condusse. Et in braccio all'amante la pose: intanto il buon vecchio per la gelosia che della sua moglie haveva, alla porta si pose, & a tutti quelli che entrar volevano, ***a tutti diceva che a disturbar sua moglie non andassero, poich'ella un suo servitio faceva:*** *finito che hebbe l'accorta moglie il suo amoroso lavoro, se ne uscí fuora di casa,* ***tutta sudata*** *per la fatica che fatta haveva,* ***e dal suo pietoso marito li fu detto, che quando mai piú li venissero simili voglie, che se le cavasse e non stesse as patire, & asciugando il sudore dal volto*** *l'accarezzava.*
Panta. sentendo il fine cadere in suo pregiudicio subito gridando dice d'esser tradito, assassinato da sua moglie. (Emphasis added)

[(Scene 11)
. . . Burattino asks Pantalone if, now Graziano has been with his wife, he must be called a cuckold. Pantalone says yes. Then Burattino, hearing this, says: ***'My lord Pantalone, your Lordship should know that I'm not the only one, but there are other cuckolds not very far away'***. and he wants to tell him what happened to an acquaintance of his. *He relates how a jealous old man found himself in a villa with his wife, over whom he kept most watchful guard, but it happened that a young man, who was in love with her and could not manage to enjoy her, found a way with the help of his servant to be summoned by a friend to a house two miles away, and so, taking his leave, went and hid in the house of a woman friend, waiting for the change as arranged with his lady. At that moment the girls of the village took it into their heads to mount a dance, and so, with a good company of male and female dancers asembled, the dance began accompanied by good music. After they had danced for a while, the wife of the aforesaid jealous old man pretended to her husband that she had a need to attend to, and hearing these words the woman who had lent her house to the lover took her indoors, with her husband's permission, and put her into the arms of her lover; and meanwhile the stupid old man, because of his jealousy of his wife, stood at the door*

> ***and told everyone who wanted to go in not to go and disturb his wife****, because she was attending to her necessity. When the clever wife had finished her amorous labours, she came out of the house* ***all in a sweat*** *because of the efforts she had made,* ***and was told by her attentive husband that whenever she felt such needs she should attend to them straight away, and not let herself ger uncomfortable, and he made a fuss of her, wiping the sweat from her face****.* / PANTALONE, hearing the end of the story come out to his discredit, starts shouting that he has been betrayed and disgraced by his wife . . .]

Here Scala gives Burattino an opening sentence to deliver verbatim. Then the majority of his so-called *novella* is in indirect speech (and so in italics in the transcription above); but there are two sentences there (in bold italics) which reflect very closely the things which Pantalone was given to say earlier. "A tutti diceva che a disturbar sua moglie non andassero, poich'ella un suo servizio faceva" (and told everyone who wanted to go in not to go and disturb his wife, because she was attending to her necessity); and ". . . li fu detto che quando mai più li venissero simili voglie, che se le cavasse, e non stesse a patire" (. . . was told by her attentive husband that whenever she felt such needs she should attend to them straight away). Moreover there is the reference – in the act 2 instructions, and then in Burattino's account—to Isabella emerging "tutta sudata" (all in a sweat), and to Pantalone mopping Isabella's perspiring brow. Scala has realised that, if a reader is going to understand and enjoy this story, he cannot avoid giving precise verbal repetitions. And indeed, if a group of actors were to take up this scenario and try to perform it, without Scala there to explain everything as director and dramatist, they would need this information too. Because he is composing and printing his scenario for posterity, he has to break out of his usual indirect speech and basic telegraphese, and include a much more detailed account of the words his actors have to say.

Another type of scene which Scala decides to render in detail is the monologue for a heroine who has been driven insane – what we would call the 'mad scene'. His motivation here may be different from the previous case. It would be quite normal for a scenario simply to say at a certain point "Here the heroine runs mad', and

leave the content and style of that madness to the actress who performs the scene. However, Flaminio Scala chooses to expand his writing at this point, and give us a verbatim sample of the ravings to be delivered. This can be explained with reference to a particular characteristic of this unique printed collection of scenarios. All the forty comedies in the 1611 volume (there are also ten plays which are not comedies) make use of the same group of masks. Most of those masks are identifiable with real actors whom we can name. They were contemporaries and colleagues of Flaminio Scala during his own acting days; though there is no documented instance of all of them ever having performed on the same stage at the same time. Therefore this collection, as well as its many other functions, has a celebratory and commemorative purpose: it is rather like the exercise often pursued today by sports journalists, who assemble in their heads the ideal team of players who in fact never played together. One individual who is clearly celebrated and remembered in Scala's *Teatro delle favole rappresentative* is Isabella Andreini, who died in 1604 seven years before it was published.

One of Isabella's most famous virtuoso numbers, which could be inserted into a whole range of different plots, was her mad scene. *La pazzia d'Isabella* was the title which she famously performed in Florence, at the much-celebrated Grand Ducal wedding celebrations of 1589[12]. In his volume of 1611, Scala gives her two opportunities to display this piece of her repertoire. His *Giornata* 38 of 1611 has the same title as the 1589 show, *La pazzia di Isabella*, though the two plays tell two entirely different stories. Scala's *Giornata* 41, *La forsennata principessa*, is then the only item in his volume which is labelled as a tragedy. The 'Demented Princess' is given the name of Alvira; but in non-comic plays, actors of both sexes would drop the fixed identities which they used regularly for comedy, and take on more exotic character names as required by the usually rather fantastical plot. We can propose with confidence that both Alvira in the tragedy and Isabella in the comedy, are being offered here by Flaminio Scala as roles played by Isabella Andreini.

The mad scenes as published by Scala tend to include passages

12 A detailed account of this play, amounting almost to another printed scenario, appears in Pavoni 1589.

in direct speech, to give a clear sample of the kind of nonsensical ravings for which this actress was famous. In *La pazzia di Isabella*[13], the character Isabella has eloped from Turkey with Orazio, but has now been abandoned by him in favour of Flaminia. Her mad scenes take place in act 3. (Passages given in italics are indirect-speech references to the words the character uses; and bold italics, as before, indicate words to be delivered verbatim).

> (Scena 8)
> ISABELLA vestita da pazza, si pone in mezo di Burat. e di Franc. dicendo voler loro dire cose di grandissima importanza. essi si fermano ad ascoltare. & ella comincia a dire: '***Io mi ricordo l'anno non me lo ricordo, che un'Arpicordo pose d'accordo una Pavaniglia Spagnola con una gagliarda di Santin da Parma, per la qual cosa poi, le lasagne, i maccheroni, e la polenta si vestirono a bruno, non potendo comportare che la gatta fura fusse amica delle belle fanciulle d'Algieri: pure come piacque al califfo d'Egitto, fu concluso, che domattina sarete tuti duo messi in berlina***', seguitando poi di dire cose simili da pazza: essi la vogliono pigliare, ella se ne fugge per strada, essi la seguono. (117*r*; emphasis added)

> [(Scene 8)
> ISABELLA dressed as a lunatic, joins Burattino and Franceschina, saying she wants to tell them something extremely important. They stay to listen, and she starts off saying: '***I remember, in the year I don't remember, the honourable member tried to dismember the membrane from a vain Jane from Spain; and so the lasagne, the macaroni and the polenta all dressed in black because they couldn't stand that the sly puss should befriend the pretty girls in Algiers; all the same, on the orders of the Caliph of Egypt, it was decreed that tomorrow morn you'll both be publicly shorn***', and so on, with similar crazy things. They try to grab her, but she escapes down the street, and they follow her out.]

13 Full translation in Andrews 2008, 225-38.

(Scena 14)
ISABELLA da pazza dice al Capit. di conoscerlo, lo saluta, e dice ***d'haverlo veduto fra le 48 imagini celesti, che ballava il canario con la Luna vestita di verde***, & altre cose tutte allo sproposito, poi col suo bastone bastona il Capit. & Arlecchino, quali fuggono, & ella dietro seguitandoli. (117*v*; emphasis added)

[(Scene 14) ISABELLA running mad, tells the Capitano she knows him, greets him, and says **she has seen him before among the forty-eight holy images, dancing the Canary with the Moon dressed in green**, and other nonsensical things; then she beats the Capitano and Arlecchino with her cudgel, they run away, and she follows them out.] [14]

Later, in the comic dénouement, Isabella is cured of her insanity by Dottor Graziano, and marries her lover Orazio who has undergone a change of heart.

In the tragic tale of *La forsennata principessa*[15], the heroine Alvira is in an almost identical predicament to that of Isabella in *Giornata* 38: she has eloped with Prince Tarfè, and then been abandoned and betrayed by him. He has then been killed in battle, and his severed head brought to her: she turns mad, therefore, at the end of act 2:

(Scena 23)
ALVIRA pazza, viene facendo e dicendo molte cose da pazza, e sempre motteggiando sopra la testa di Tarfè, e del tradimento fatto, dice loro: ***'Io non mi maraviglio che l'acqua del fiume sia dolce, e quella del mare salata, perché l'insalata va sempre col suo olio filosoforum, e con lo stretto di Gibilterra, o vuoi di Zibilterra, ché l'uno, e l'altro nome li vien detto, pure come piacque al suo fatal destino, quella poveretta dell'Orsa maggiore si calzò gli stivali d'Artofilace, andò a pigliar ostreghe, e cappe longhe nel golfo di Laiazzo in ver Soria: che la cosa sia, o non sia, sia voga, voga sia la mala pasca, e con usate tempre vi sia anche***

14 It should be remarked that these English versions of Isabella's mad scenes give priority to conveying the series of nonsensically rhyming words in the original, rather than to a literal translation of those words. An alternative analysis of this 'mad speech' can investigate its possible references to folklore, mythology, or even topical events.

15 Full translation in Andrews 2008, 264-73.

> ***il mal sempre, e tutto 'l dí su l'Asen*'.** Ped. e Buratt. se ne ridono, ella soggiunge altre cose allo sproposito ad imitatione di quanto ha detto, poi si mette a bastonarli, essi fuggono, & ella dietro lungo il mare, e finisce l'Atto Secondo. (129*r*; emphasis added)
>
> [(Scene 23)
> Alvira comes in mad, doing and saying many crazy things. She constantly comments on Tarfè's head, and on his betrayal of her, saying to them: **'*I am not surprised that river water is sweet and seawater is salty, because salad always goes with philosoper's oil, and with the Strait of Gibraltar, or Zibraltar, because both names are used. And yet, in accordance with its established destiny, the Great Bear – poor thing – put on her feet the boots of Artophylax and went to collect oysters and mussels in the Bay of Laiazzo, over towards Syria. Whether it's true or not, yo-heave-ho, away we go, and may God rot you, fast and slow; I wish you the worst, until you burst, and may you go straight to hell as well, and all day riding on an ass.*'** Pedrolino and Burattino laugh at her, and she adds other nonsensical things along the line of the above; then she starts to beat them with a stick. They run away, and she follows them out along the shore, and the Second Act ends.]

This being a tragedy, the outcome for the heroine is very different. In 3.4, Alvira delivers another mad monologue, with some more verbatim passages recorded in the scenario: she then commits suicide: "Ciò detto salta nel mare, s'affoga, e non si vede più" (having said that, she jumps into the sea, is drowned, and is seen no more).

The two heroines who go insane in these two scenarios do so for exactly the same reason: they both eloped with a lover, and were then abandoned in favour of another woman. (There are echoes of Ariosto's Olimpia, or the mythical Ariadne, women similarly abandoned). The fairly lengthy passages which Scala includes in these mad scenes are all in very much the same style, irrespective of whether they contribute to a comedy or a tragedy. They have little in common with Ophelia's mad scenes in *Hamlet*, in the sense that they contain few allusions, if any, to the situation which drove the heroines insane. Insanity is treated more with derision than with pathos: the speeches just offer streams of entertaining

nonsense, often held together by rhyme. In the comedy: "*Ricordo . . . ricordo . . . Arpicordo . . .* pose *d'accordo . . .*", "*Domattina . . . berlina . . .*". In the tragedy: repetitions of "*sia*", with "il malanno che Dio vi *dia*"; "nella vostra *tasca* sia la mala *pasca*"; "*tempre*" and "*sempre*". And in both plays, even in the tragedy, a demented rant culminates in the actress beating two comic characters off the stage.

We have to assume that all these characteristics reflect what Isabella Andreini used to do on stage, before her death in 1604, in the tirades which she composed for herself and used repeatedly in her own repertory. They could even have been taken by Scala from Isabella's own notebooks, which would have been in the possession of her widower Francesco Andreini (whose chief role during his acting career was that of the braggart Capitano Spavento). Francesco was collaborating with Scala at this time, and in fact contributed a preface to the 1611 scenario collection. He was also responsible for publishing, in whatever edited and adjusted form, Isabella's *Lettere*, and *Fragmenti* from her theatrical repertoire – the *Lettere* from 1607, and the *Fragmenti* from 1616.[16] The *Fragmenti* include a mad scene in a very similar style to those included in the Scala scenarios, though it is assigned to a despairing male lover rather than to a female one. There was raw material here which both Francesco Andreini and Flaminio Scala were using at this time, in order to commemorate Isabella.

We have seen, then, that at certain moments Scala's scenarios turn briefly into play scripts: the actors are given precise words to speak. Where does that leave us in terms of defining 'levels of orality'? Perhaps it leaves us with something of a paradox. The text of a scenario usually avoids offering any words destined for direct oral transmission: it is, as we have suggested, a set of instructions, or invitations, for a group of actors to supply and perform their own oral texts. Scenarios are an absence of orality, inviting an orality which is not recorded. We see now that Flaminio Scala, just occasionally, stepped outside that format and chose to record exactly what an actor should say. But his reasons for offering a text which was temporarily more 'oral' was that his scenarios were

16 See Andrews 2013, no. 10 in the present volume.

composed to be printed and diffused among those readers who chose to purchase them. We have proposed two different reasons, in two different cases, why exact words needed to be transcribed.

In the case of the adultery story *Il vecchio geloso*, the performance was to be constructed partly round the extended narration on stage of a kind of *novella*. The need to make sense of this, for both potential readers and potential actors, forced Scala to compose and print a fuller text than a scenario normally contained.

In the case of the 'mad scenes', Scala wished to give his readers a commemorative sample of Isabella Andreini's virtuoso displays. He was resurrecting on the page a style of performance which some of his readers might actually remember, and about which he wanted others to be informed.

In both cases, we might say, the greater degree of 'written-ness' attached to a published text invited, occasionally, a greater degree of genuinely 'oral' content in the writing. And there is our paradox.

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Part 2
Women On Stage and Behind the Scenes

6

Anti-Feminism in *Commedia Erudita**

The title of this essay has been chosen with some care, but with some misgivings. We could legitimately have used the word ‘misogyny’, in the sense which that term understandably has in much feminist discourse. But in more general conversation, ‘misogyny’ still has overtones of active hatred or contempt for women. When such feelings occur in the plays now under discussion, then ‘misogyny’ is appropriate; but I want also to cover milder, less deliberate, even less conscious attitudes towards the female sex, such as incomprehension or pure neglect. These may in the end be more common than programmatic ‘misogyny’, in the conversational sense. I hope that readers will accept ‘anti-feminism’ as a working term to cover all such attitudes, from the most hostile to the most tenuous.

Anti-feminism on whose part? It is not my principal intention on this occasion to analyse alleged feelings of characters in plays: that risks giving those characters too much psychological autonomy. (‘Too much’ by comparison with later types of drama, where fictional characters have more individuality: also ‘too much’ in general theoretical terms. Characters in drama, and especially in early *commedia erudita*, are not ‘people’ – they act as code-words in a dialogue between dramatist and audience.) Rather, this essay is about the anti-feminism which Italian Renaissance comic dramatists displayed in organizing and presenting their material, and the corresponding assumptions and reactions which they probably expected, and probably got, from their spectators.

In the long tradition of ‘classical’ European comedy, from around 1500 to 1800, many of the best-known plays attempt not to be anti-feminist, by the measure of their time and society. Apart from any

* This is a shortened version of the original essay, omitting material which is repeated in essay no. 7.

other consideration, they often respond to a commercial demand that there be strong sympathetic roles for actresses to play.[1] The outcome of such attempts can still be subject to the legitimate attacks of modern feminist critics. Male dramatists' views of female psychology may be seen as suspect; and serious questions can be raised about the relationship between levels of freedom and initiative given to women on stage and those which they currently enjoyed in real society. But in many of the most familiar comedies, female characters are allowed to show themselves as individuals, and to have a point of view; and at least the audience is invited to feel some concern about the fate of a heroine, as well as that of a hero. Often women are made to get their way over men, by a combination of greater moral sense and sympathetic trickery. Such generalisations apply in various ways – working backwards in time – to Mozart and Da Ponte, to Beaumarchais, to Goldoni, to Goldsmith, to Marivaux, to Congreve, to Molière, and to Shakespeare.

By contrast, one of the reasons why 16th-century Italian *commedie erudite* are not often revived for the modern stage is that there is not enough in them for actresses to do, or for female spectators to relate to. This is partly because of the ancient Roman models from which they sprang. The comedy of Plautus and Terence was cavalier in its treatment of its female characters. In many plots, the 'heroine' is merely an inert prize to be won or lost by one or other of the male characters – almost a piece of stage property like the pot of gold in Plautus's *Aulularia*, which is equally the object of competing interests. If she is a slave girl in the keeping of a pimp, she may be brought on for a scene or two to giggle and wriggle and exchange passionate platitudes, or simply to be hustled from the keeping of one male to another. If she is a respectable girl who will end up in a proper marriage, then Roman social propriety required that she never be seen by the spectators at all. The heroine of Terence's *Hecyra*, for example, undergoes (or has previously undergone) rape, marriage, pregnancy and then reconciliation with the husband who is responsible for all three – but she remains for the whole of the play enclosed within her parents' house. She gets

1 A most interesting analysis of the changes in dramaturgy brought about by the rise of the female performer is to be found in Howe 1992.

a reasonably sympathetic press from her nearest and dearest, and we are presumably supposed to feel some concern for her, but we do not get even the briefest glimpse of her or of her point of view.

This inhibition seems to have been accepted unquestioningly by many of the earliest writers of original Italian *commedie erudite*. It may indeed still have corresponded with the nervousness felt in real Italian Renaissance society about letting respectable young virgins be seen in public. It was certainly reflected in the fact that, as long as performances remained amateur and gentlemanly, women were rarely allowed to exhibit themselves on stage, and female parts in comedies in particular were almost always played by males. In none of Ariosto's comedies[2] does the audience get more than a brief sight of the girl whose marriage is to constitute the happy ending. For example, in both versions of *Il negromante* (1520 and 1528) there are Emilia and Lavinia to be paired off with the right young men, but neither of them ever appears. Emilia has been put through a marriage ceremony with Cinzio; but Cinzio is already secretly married to Lavinia and trying to stay faithful to her. When this is all sorted out, Emilia is married off to another young man, Camillo, who has previously been shown as foolish, vain and callous – he was trying to get himself smuggled into Emilia's room, and was perfectly prepared to take her by force. Ariosto does not ask himself what his fictional Emilia would think of Camillo, if given the choice; but her pairing with him tidies up loose ends, and – perhaps most importantly – establishes a *parentela*, a marriage alliance between the various patriarchs. It is convenient, so it is made to happen, and Emilia is an invisible jigsaw piece fitted into a suitable place in the pattern.

Machiavelli's second original play, first performed in 1525, is called *Clizia*,[3] because the fate of the young lady of that name is the sole issue at stake in its single-minded plot. However, Clizia also never appears on stage; and this fact is justified in what seems a routine way in the Prologue:

2 See Ariosto 1974 in the Works Cited section for the Italian edition. The comedies are translated, in a stilted but adequate fashion, in Ariosto 1975.

3 See Machiavelli 1984 and many other Italian editions. See Machiavelli 1961 for an English translation.

> Questa commedia si chiama Clizia, perché cosí ha nome la fanciulla che si combatte. Non aspettate di vederla, perché Sofronia, che l'ha allevata, non vuole per onestà che la venga fuora.
>
> [This comedy is called *Clizia*, because that is the name of the girl who is being fought over. Don't expect to see her, because Sofronia, who has brought her up, doesn't want her to come outside because of decency.][4]

Machiavelli is perfectly prepared to accept and express the socio-dramatic inhibition which he found in Plautus and Terence. In fact, one notices it continuing to apply very particularly in the Florentine tradition of *commedia erudita*, which does not get properly started until the 1530s after the final Medici restoration. From Lorenzino de' Medici's *Aridosia* of 1536 all through the 1540s and 1550s, the heroines of Florentine comedies tend to be absent from the stage, or very nearly. This corresponds, on one side, with the greater degree of classical imitation which we find in Florence – almost all the plays have identifiable Roman sources.[5] But it may also have some relation to a particular strictness in Florentine social custom, possibly not reflected in all other Italian towns. In Benedetto Varchi's *La suocera* of 1546 (based closely on Terence's *Hecyra*, with some extra invented plot material)[6], the young hero Fabrizio has a conventional complaint about the pangs of unsuccessful love, and emphasises his disappointment that the lady concerned is so carefully guarded that she has no idea what he is going through. In Siena, he seems to say in 2.5, things would be different:

> Almeno lo sapesse chi n'è cagione! Bene aggia Siena in questa parte; non sono le donne meno oneste, perché siano piú libere, quando sono veramente donne, ma bene meno melense.
>
> [If only at least the person who is causing [all this pain] knew about it! Good luck to Siena, in this respect: ladies are not less honest for being more free, if they're real ladies, just less simple-minded.]

4 All English translations in the present article are my own.

5 For more evidence of this, see Andrews 1993, 111-17.

6 The only available text of this comedy, apart from the first edition of 1569 (the play was performed in 1546) is in Varchi 1858.

To be subject to this kind of purdah, whether social or dramatic, a woman had to be young, unmarried, and upper-class. In *Clizia*, Machiavelli had given a good deal of the initiative, and all of the moral superiority, to the matriarch Sofronia, who plots unmercifully to bring her husband into line. Later Florentine dramatists respond to this hint, and their comedies contain a number of middle-aged females with a fair amount of character. Giovan Battista Gelli based his successful *La sporta* (Gelli 1959)[7] on *Plautus's Aulularia*; but he took the interesting gratuitous step of multiplying a single matron figure from his source, Eunomia, into three separate independent widows, each intervening in the plot in a different way. Moreover, in addition to matrons both virtuous and sour, writers of comedy began to introduce female servants of all ages who were developed for comic relief. This *fantesca* figure was even allowed sometimes (though less often in Florence than elsewhere) to be cheerfully unchaste. Both on stage and off, lower-class females had less sexual virtue demanded of them, because their activities could not damage any family honour which a dramatist or his upper-class audience would take seriously. But throughout the comedies of Ariosto, Machiavelli, and the Florentines and Romans of the first half of the sixteenth century, young heroines remain locked away; and the same is true in the more 'regular' Venetian comedy of Calmo and Dolce,[8] once they adopt the classical rules and the urban setting. Ruzante, of course, is a law unto himself, and often represents a very different social class.[9]

We have seen from Ariosto's *Negromante* that when no relationship is built between an audience and a heroine it becomes very easy to dispose of her in ways of which, if she were a real person, she might not approve. There are other examples in this period of callous pairings at the end of a comedy, where a girl ends up married to a character whom up to now the audience have

7 Performed and published in 1543, this comedy achieved eleven editions in the sixteenth century.

8 For these two dramatists, and their place in the development of comedy in the Republic of Venice, see Andrews 1993, 144-50, 161-3. See also Padoan 1982.

9 Ronnie Ferguson (2000) is now the main English-language source of information on Ruzante.

seen as a figure of fun or contempt. The marriage between Camillo and Emilia in *Il negromante* is matched, or even outdone, by the outcome of Francesco Belo's *Il pedante*.[10] Here the ludicrous but also repulsive pedant Prudenzio is roundly mocked and humiliated for most of the play, but at the end he is allowed to marry the girl Livia, whom he wanted all along. Livia's appearance in the play is limited to a very fleeting one in 4.3, where she may be no more than a voice from off stage.

There is an even more cynical manipulation in Giacomo Cenci's *Gli errori*, a comedy about which very little is known in terms of author, date and background.[11] A young girl named Lucilla, reckoned to be rather flighty, is abducted by one person when she expects to be eloping with another. The men who actually take her find they had made a mistake, but one of them still takes sexual advantage. In the end Lucilla is returned to her household ostensibly still a virgin, and married off to the most ridiculous character in the play: we are informed with broad winks and suppressed laughter that she will probably carry on with her ravisher behind her husband's back. From the remarks made around her at the end of the play, she is clearly intended to be seen as sexually 'awakened' and whorish, regarded with a mixture of appetite, collusion, and contempt by the male characters – and, we must therefore also assume, by the men in the audience.

Other examples of this tendency could be listed, but they would be merely repetitious.[12] They underline a point about Renaissance

10 *Il pedante* is often dated 1529, on the strength of hearsay evidence about a now untraceable printing; but the earliest surviving edition dates from 1538. The text can be found in Borsellino 1962, and in a 1979 anastatic reprint of the 1538 edition.

11 There are three sixteenth-century editions of this play, but the earliest one has no date: it has been provisionally placed around 1535. Nothing is known about the author, who may have been writing under a pseudonym.

12 It may be worth adding that the tendency to marry young girls off to men whom they do not know, or do not love, is still to be found in the eighteenth-century comedies of Carlo Goldoni – for example in *I due gemelli veneziani* (1747-1748). Even in his later less farcical comedies, Goldoni more than once manipulates things so that his heroines should 'come to their senses' and accept a marriage of convenience: see his '*Villeggiatura* trilogy'. The convenience, of course, is that of the patriarchal property structure.

society of which we probably no longer need to be convinced. Young daughters were seen quite routinely as bargaining counters in elaborate games and relationships involving the welfare and honour of their families; 'welfare' and 'honour' were concepts formulated and defined by the patriarchal society; and the desires or preferences of the girls themselves were almost always suppressed or subordinated. We can regard such generalizations as commonplace. What we may need to consider in addition, however, is that in the specific field of dramaturgy the forces ranged against the development of female characters were partly social and ideological, but partly also theatrical and technical.

Some dramatists may have wanted to resist the tendency to define the significance of a young girl's fate in terms of its effect on her male relations. But in so far as the new brand of comedy involved mimicry of real behaviour and custom, it was in fact rather difficult to give more autonomy to a respectable young girl and remain within the bounds of social plausibility. In addition, in the first half of the century all female characters were played by males. One can imagine a certain scepticism, on the part of dramatists who were themselves theatrically inexperienced and writing without a strong performing tradition, as to whether a boy actor could effectively incarnate the serious emotions of a heroine in what was intended to be a realistically mimetic mode of drama. The fact that Shakespeare wrote Viola and Cleopatra for boys may only be marginally relevant – Elizabethan boy actors were highly trained professional apprentices, or else young gentlemen who had been equally intensively trained in school. Ariosto and Machiavelli, by contrast, had to make do with a young conscripted courtier or friend of the family, who might only act two or three times in his life. In general terms, it can be argued that Italian theatre had to wait for two important theatrical developments, before writing good parts for heroines became a practical proposition. In the first place, female performers had to be accepted on the stage – and they eventually were accepted, of course, in professional companies in the second half of the century.[13] And secondly, comedy had to free itself from

13 The novelty, and the full implications, of the appearance of actresses in Italy had not yet (in 1997) been fully explored by any scholar. The most

the classical format to the extent of allowing scenes to take place indoors. As long as the setting was restricted to the public street, the appearance of a respectable female either automatically broke social taboos, or else had to be justified by extreme developments in the plot.[14]

All these remarks suppose that the theatrical obstacles were actually felt as obstacles – that some dramatists might want to evade them, and give more significance to a young female character. If they did, it would be because the rather rigid theatrical models of Roman comedy were not the only sources they had in mind. There was in fact a well-established pattern in narrative fiction, as opposed to classical drama, of stories which exposed young heroines to various trials and adventures to test and confirm their mettle, stories based on romance and folklore involving falsely accused brides, persecuted lovers, abandoned daughters, and other examples of obstinate courage and virtue. Some models even involved passionately amorous heroines, whose emotions were so absorbing that questions of normal social morality faded into the background. There is plenty of this sort of material in Boccaccio (and not only in the *Decameron*); and one of the standard features of such stories, which has plenty of theatrical potential, is the affecting monologue in which the victimised or languishing heroine laments her circumstances, inveighs against Fortune and/or her enemies, and generally gets the reader (or spectatore) on her side.[15] There was every invitation, on the face of it, for this aspect of Boccaccian narrative to be dramatised in the new comedy, alongside so many other elements from the same sources. So far we have shown that a substantial number of authors of *commedia erudita* ignored or

extensive reflections on the subject had appeared in Taviani and Schino 1982, where it is proposed that the first actresses were recruited from the ranks of 'honest courtesans'.

14 This point was explicitly recognised by Goldoni, in his manifesto comedy of 1750, 1.11.

15 Such passages are frequent in Boccaccio's prose *Filocolo* and his verse *Filostrato* and *Teseida*, as well as in some seminal stories from the *Decameron* such as that of Tancredi and Ghismonda (4.2). In fact Boccaccio's *Fiammetta* inflates such a monologue into a whole prose novel, narrated by the heroine in the first person.

consciously resisted such an invitation. Such a statement applies at least to the first half of the sixteenth century, before the appearance of professional actresses and before the various alternative pressures exerted on the genre by other developing theatrical forms – particularly the examples of pastoral and of *commedia dell'arte*.

The 'substantial number' of anti-feminist authors does not include quite everybody, however, and the picture has to be completed by identifying the individuals, and the places, which are relative exceptions.

The earliest example of a comic heroine who both uses her own initiative and expresses her own point of view does in fact come very early – it is Santilla in Bibbiena's *Calandra* of 1513.[16] In this play, whose programmatic attachment to Boccaccian models is notorious, Santilla is allowed to inveigh against Fortune in a satisfactory manner on more than one occasion; and, of course, she is able to be actively involved in trickery and deceit because she is circulating in male disguise. Interestingly, the other comedy produced at Urbino for the same festivities also takes some more cautious steps in a similar direction. Nicola Grasso's *Eutychia*[17] has its eponymous heroine like *Clizia*: she too has been separated from her proper roots, but she is allowed to tell us what she feels about Fortune and the disadvantages of her sex (in a monologue in 2.2). She is also given a spirited verbal exchange with a cheeky servant (3.1), before reverting back to the role of the prize for which various male rivals must contend. These attempts, however inept, to create some emotional and existential autonomy for female characters were presented to the court of Urbino, with Baldassarre Castiglione producing the spectacle – one wonders whether he was already spreading propaganda in that court in favour of the limited, carefully defined version of feminism which appears in Book 3 of *Il libro del Cortegiano*.

16 Performed 1513, published 1521, this comedy ran to 22 editions during the sixteenth century, making it the most popular comedy of its genre. The standard modern edition is Padoan 1985: it was Padoan who insisted on the original title of *Calandra*, rather than the *Calandria* which subsequently became used.

17 Performed 1513, published 1524. Now edited by Luigia Stefani in Stefani 1978.

The other centre where some effort was made to develop the heroine was Siena, where all 'regular' comedy appeared under the aegis of the Accademia degli Intronati, and where the individual plays bear the stamp of a collective house style. Lelia, in the anonymous *Gli ingannati* of 1532,[18] is a natural successor to Bibbiena's Santilla, and has the extra attractive feature (in the eyes of contemporaries, and possibly in our eyes too) of working all her deceits in favour of an obstinately faithful love for the fickle Flamminio, whom she eventually contrives to win back and marry. The Intronati in fact made a point in all their plays of including at least one heroine whose chief characteristic is constancy in love, and who thus can be permitted to take the limelight, and be applauded comfortably by a respectable audience. It is the beginning of the theatrical topos to which Louise George Clubb has given the title "Woman as Wonder" (Clubb 1989, 65-89), and which then played such a large part in Shakespearean drama. Sienese plays are also characterised (as observed in Celse 1969) by a tendency for the women to get their way over the men in the end, by one means or another. The Sienese had already shown a fondness for 'constant women' on stage in their dramas in non-classical format written before 1530 – the ones from what is now called the 'pre-Rozzi' period, which make open use of romance and folk motifs.[19]

This relative feminism of the Sienese plays links interestingly with the comment about the relative liberty of Sienese women, quoted above from the Florentine comedy *La suocera*. The Intronati Academy were in fact trying to construct a courtly social atmosphere in which the women would constantly be appealed to as arbiters of taste, taking on a role very similar to that proposed for the court lady by Castiglione. It seems that we can place the earliest efforts to resist the anti-feminism of Roman comedy just in those two centres of Urbino and Siena.

18 Performed 1532, published 1537 and in 19 further sixteenth-century editions. An anastatic reprint of an early edition has been edited in 1984 by Nerida Newbigin, and the text also appears in various Italian anthologies. For further analysis of this comedy and Siena in general, see Andrews 1982 and the essays no. 1 and 17 in the present volume.

19 For this rather marginalised school of theatre, see Alonge 1967; and more recently Valenti 1992. See also Black and Clubb 1993.

We must not exaggerate the results, however. The heroine Lelia of *Gli ingannati*, and then the later heroine Lucrezia in Piccolomini's *Alessandro* (1544),[20] are both given most of their stage opportunities by being in the unnatural and implausible situation of male disguise, indicative of the difficulties in bringing the young girl before the public gaze. In Piccolomini's *Amor costante*,[21] the heroine (another Lucrezia) is celebrated to the skies for her marital fidelity against the odds – but she is only brought on to the stage once, in Act v, to vindicate herself in what she thinks is a dying speech. The struggle of the Intronati to give full weight to a female character in female clothes only really came to fruition much later in Girolamo Bargagli's *La pellegrina*. This was composed in the 1560s but only performed in 1589[22] – by which time the casting of a woman in the role was at least a theoretical possibility.

With all the examples accumulated so far, we have been making two simple but important points: that in *commedia erudita* generally there is a tendency to downgrade or ignore female characters and the female point of view; and that the minority of dramatists who might have wished to break this trend were hampered by technical difficulties. What we need to propose next is that this simple general tendency produces a climate of practice, and a climate of attitude, which ought to be taken more fully into account when we try to reach conclusions about the tone, effect and message of individual comedies from this period. The way we tend to read certain plays is unconsciously affected by our own expectations and presuppositions, both social and theatrical. These expectations were not all shared by the dramatists or the audiences of the time; and if we do take account of the strong vein of anti-feminism which permeates the genre in those early decades, then some well-known comedies can take on a new aspect. In the present study, some suggestions will now be made about how this might apply to

20 Performed 1544, published 1545; edited by Florindo Cerreta (1966).

21 Composed 1536, but the performance was aborted; published 1540. 1990 anastatic reprint ed. Nerida Newbigin; also in the Borsellino anthology (see note 10 above).

22 Text in the Borsellino anthology (see note 10 above). Translated by Bruno Ferraro as *The Female Pilgrim* (see Bargagli 1988). See also Andrews 1982.

three comedies: Ariosto's *La Lena* (1529) (see in Ariosto 1974)[23], the anonymous *La Veniexiana* (now dated by Giorgio Padoan to 1536)[24], and the best known and most praised work of the whole genre: Machiavelli's *La mandragola* (c.1518).[25]

Ariosto's Lena is the villain of her play, because she is shown as betraying a trust. Charged with educating Fazio's daughter Licinia in a decent manner, she is in fact selling the girl's virginity to the highest bidder – behaving exactly like the Plautine *leno* or pimp figure which her name deliberately recalls. It is made clear, especially in 2.1 and 2.2, that she is doing this out of revenge against Fazio who has treated her shamefully – for years he has been exploiting her sexually and in many other ways, and offering the most miserly of rewards. The moral situation is therefore that "Those to whom evil is done/ Do evil in return" (Auden 1940), and the audience's derisive contempt is certainly directed against Fazio – for his meanness, and later for his abject inability to shake off his sordid sexual attachment. Lena is certainly allowed a chance to explain her position, both in monologue and in argument with Fazio. She says (2.2) that if Fazio's wife were alive she would take her revenge by cuckolding him; but now prostituting his daughter will have to do instead, and will be a way of recovering by other means the money which Fazio ought to have given her:

Anch'io d'esser pagata mi delibero
per ogni via, sia lecita o non lecita:
né Dio né 'l mondo me ne può riprendere.
S'egli avesse moglier, tutto il mio studio
saria di farlo far quel che Pacifico
è da lui fatto; ma ciò non potendosi,
perché non l'ha, con la figliuola vogliolo
far esser quel ch'io non so come io nomini.

23 As well as by Beame and Sbrocchi, this play has been translated by G. Williams in Penman 1978; and by C.P. Brand in Cairns 1991.

24 As well as appearing in many Italian anthologies, this play has been fully edited by Giorgio Padoan (see Padoan 1974). See now Andrews' essay no. 7 in the present volume.

25 Also in Machiavelli 1984 and numerous other Italian editions. Translated by J.R. Hale in Machiavelli 1961 (see note 3 above); also in the Penman anthology (see note 23 above).

> [I'm going to find a way to make him pay for it somehow or other, by fair means or dirty ones: / I can't be blamed for that, by God or anyone. / If he still had a wife, then I could concentrate / on making him a cuckold, as Pacifico / has been made one by him. Since that's impossible, / because his wife is dead, it's through his daughter that / I'll make him into. . . something, there's no name for it.][26]

It is noteworthy that, although she is a woman, she is quite happy to regard wife or daughter simply as the property of the patriarch – if she can dishonour Licinia, she socially damages Fazio who owns Licinia, and what the girl might feel about it is neither here nor there. (Licinia, like other similar heroines, never appears on stage to tell us what she feels).

Lena is not an attractive character, therefore, and she even seems to be colluding with a sexist value system. But she is in her turn a victim of the disgraceful behaviour of her male protector. We can very easily imagine her being played in a modern production by a strong actress who could depict her as a warped human being, but a human being none the less, and give a plausible impression of how she came to be warped. Although Ariosto's text seems open to that kind of performance, it is unlikely to have been taken that way in 1529. Lena would have been played by a man, and would probably have ended up as un unmerciful caricature. Men in drag, especially when performing for a coterie audience of their own peers, usually offer wild parodies of what they take to be female speech and behaviour. It must be suggested that in practice, on stage, in 1529, Ariosto's Lena would have been mocked and derided not only for her treachery and unchastity but also for being a woman. Fazio would certainly be blamed for corrupting her; but she would also be blamed, or at least despised, for being feminine and malleable enough to be corrupted. The double standard of morality involves a kind of Catch-22.

26 The translation offered here reproduces Ariosto's preferred drama metre of the *endecasillabo sciolto*, with the dactylic ending, which he thought best imitated the iambic trimeter of Roman comedy. If the result sounds pedestrian, and if the rhythm is maintained with some desperate expedients, then (in the judgement of some, at least) Ariosto himself achieves little better, in this metre. His octaves in the *Orlando furioso* are quite another matter.

This same vision of men posturing in female dress can seriously affect, and even undermine, some established readings of the anonymous *La Veniexiana*, where for a modern reader such issues become central to the whole play. Modern critics tend to see this comedy as taking the side of its female characters; but considerations about who performed them, and about how and where play was originally staged, suggest a depiction of women which is largely derisive.[27]

There is also, I think, a revisionist view to propose about Machiavelli's *La mandragola*, in the light of the anti-feminist context which I have been attaching to *commedia erudita*. It relates, naturally, to one of the central questions in the play: the author's treatment of, and the audience's expected reaction to, the character of Lucrezia.

Some critics, and many undergraduate students, tend to come up with detailed enthusiastic theories about what Lucrezia's character and motives are, and how to describe her transformation at the end of the play. In most cases these analyses have been supplied by the creative imagination of the critic or the student, rather than by the text – because the text gives us very little to go on. Lucrezia is subject to the social and theatrical constraints which we have seen to be laid on most heroines in early *commedia erudita*. She only appears on stage twice, in 3.10-3.11 and in 5.5-5.6.

She has one substantial speech in 3.10 which establishes for the audience that her intentions and instincts are genuinely chaste and virtuous. In 3.11 she is limited to short repeated exclamations of bewilderment and horror in the face of Fra Timoteo's attempts to persuade her that a plan to commit adultery might be justified. In the final scenes of the comedy her speeches are equally brief, and inform us of just two things: that she has suddenly acquired a mind of her own (her husband remarks on her uncharacteristic brusque decisiveness), and that she accepts her new relationship with Callimaco (though in what spirit, the speeches are too brief to show). One gets the impression that Machiavelli was reluctant

27 See now chapter 7 of the present volume: it examines *La Veniexiana* in full detail, and offers quotations which were originally also included in this present essay.

to bring her on stage at all, but accepted the necessity of showing us some glimpse of Lucrezia before and after her adultery, so that we can be convinced of the radical change that has taken place in her. In the light of how female characters are handled in so many other plays of the time, I am tempted to suggest that Machiavelli was not really very interested in what Lucrezia thinks or feels about the transformation that she undergoes. She has been corrupted from being a chaste wife into being a willing, or at least compliant, adulteress. There is irony in the fact that her apparently unshakeable chastity, expressed in her only long speech in 3.10, is in the end so quickly undermined, and that she does not follow the virtuous example of her Roman namesake in preferring death to dishonour. But to Machiavelli, and to his potential audience, these ironies and corruptions take place in the abstract, as assaults on what they see as 'virtue' in society at large. I do not think that any real attention is paid to the possibility that a Lucrezia in real life, as opposed to a stage Lucrezia, might actually feel a personal repugnance and outrage at the rape which is effectively practised on her. The principal significance of her moral collapse is the dishonour done to her husband and to patriarchal values – there is some more derisive irony in the implication that Messer Nicia will have his name and property inherited by a child who is not really his.

As I have suggested, the few words put into Lucrezia's mouth at the end of the play give little clue to her feelings on the situation. Phrases like "Dio el voglia!" (5.6; May it please God!) and "Io l'ho molto caro" (ibid.; I hold him very dear) could be said in a whole range of different tones of voice, and it is for an actress (or, at that time, an actor) to decide whether she is full of sexual enthusiasm, gloomily resigned to her lot, or revengeful against her husband, to mention just three possibilities.

The audience has of course also heard the account given by Callimaco, in 4.4, of what Lucrezia felt and said after their night of love. What weight we are intended to give to this second-hand evidence is hard to determine. At the very least we have to see it as significant that, due to all kinds of inhibitions, Machiavelli felt unable to allow Lucrezia herself to express any of it directly on stage, and had to leave it to the equivalent of a messenger speech. But how far are we meant to trust the messenger? Maybe that

question is unsuitably subtle for what was after all one of the very first apprentice attempts at a brand new kind of theatre – maybe we should accept the second-hand evidence as if it were first-hand, and just note that Machiavelli felt unable to convey it in any other way. But it is hard not to look a little closer (along with the acute Italian critic Luigi Blasucci), and note that although Callimaco quotes some of Lucrezia's words verbatim, there are other things he says which are his words rather than hers (Blasucci 1964). It is he, not she, who claims that she has been converted by his sexual prowess after the previous pathetic attempts of her husband:

> . . . gustato che differenzia è dalla giacitura mia a quella di Nicia, e da e' baci d'uno amante giovane a quelli d'uno marito vecchio . . .
>
> [. . . having tasted what a difference there is between lying with me and lying with Nicia, and between the kisses of a young lover and those of an old husband . . .]

But Callimaco was bound to think that, wasn't he? – whether it was true or not. What he *quotes* her as saying is that since everybody around her – husband, mother, confessor, as well as her lover – has pushed her into this situation, she has to accept that it is the will of heaven:

> Poiché l'astuzia tua, la sciocchezza del mio marito, la semplicità di mia madre e la tristizia del mio confessoro mi hanno condutto a fare quello che mai per me medesima arei fatto, io voglio giudicare che venga da una celeste disposizione, che abbi voluto cosí, e non sono sufficiente a recusare quello che 'l Cielo vuole che io accetti.
>
> [Since your cunning, my husband's stupidity, my mother's simple-mindedness and my confessor's villainy have led me to do what I would never have done on my own, then I must take it as a heavenly decree that things must be this way, and I am not so bold as to refuse what Heaven wants me to accept.]

Her quoted words, even here, do not say whether she sees the situation as pleasurable or not. On this evidence too, Machiavelli does not seem to care much about that. What is clear is that she comes across as malleable, as a person who will do what her

authority figures tell her. Previously they had told her to be chaste, so she was; now they are telling her to commit adultery, so she does. That, perhaps, in the view of Machiavelli and his audience, is the nature of women. Fra Timoteo gave the diagnosis in 3.9, when ruminating on how to persuade Lucrezia before she even appears:

> Madonna Lucrezia è savia e buona: ma io la giugnerò in sulla bontà. E tutte le donne hanno alla fine poco cervello.
>
> [The lady Lucrezia is well-behaved and good: but it's her goodness that I'll work on. When it comes to it, all women are pretty brainless.]

Lucrezia is corrupted by others, who are more at fault that she is because they have more judgement – but rather than being pitied, she is dismissed. Women are pliable, and she was bound to give in: dramatist and audience are more interested in the implications, moral or comic as they may be, for the males who surround her. The attitude behind all this can, for a modern audience, be better understood if we substitute for the figure of an adult wife the figure of a ten-year-old child, who has to take her cue from the adult role-models available.

La mandragola and other comedies of the time cannot be read in isolation as though they were dramatic texts from a later period. They have to be set, in addition, in their own theatrical and social, context; and part of that context was a vein of hostility, or indifference, or at the very least clumsiness, in representing female characters on stage.

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7

Staging *La Veniexiana**

During the 1530s and 1540s there were a number of things happening simultaneously in Venetian theatre, and their chronology is often hard to determine. Where texts were eventually printed, their printing date may come some time after they were performed; and on dates of performance a great deal of evidence is missing or speculative. Thus, when dealing with the three proposed categories of 'citizen' comedy, multilingual post-Ruzantian comedy (Calmo and Giancarli), and the more regular 'literary' comedy represented by Dolce and Parabosco, it is difficult to be sure which compositions and styles might have preceded and therefore influenced any of the others.

There are a few fixed points, however. One observation of Giorgio Padoan, in his book on Venetian theatre in this period, is the probable impact on Venetian culture generally, and perhaps particularly on its comic theatre, of the arrival in the city of Pietro Aretino in 1527, when Ruzante was still writing and performing and most of the others had not yet started. Aretino did not produce (or at least did not publish) any new comedies until 1542; but the printing of the final versions of *La Cortigiana* and *Il Marescalco*, duly amended to proclaim his new Venetian allegiances, took place in the 1530s. Not only these plays, but also a number of non-dramatic writings such as the vivid and scurrilous *Ragionamenti*, are bound to have impressed and even appalled Venetian cultural circles with their frankness, their satirical viciousness, and their intense linguistic creativity. Padoan argues that Aretino's 'realism' – his concentration on the seamier side of life, but also his tendency

* This paper was first delivered at a conference (in Aberystwyth, in 1993) which involved performed contributions from student actors.

to incorporate historical characters into his fiction – produced a fashion for turning gossip and even chronicle into drama (1982, 143-7). We might also add that this 'realism' is in itself one-sided, stylised, and theatrical. As well as influencing the very particular case of the anonymous *La Veniexiana* which we are now about to discuss, Aretino's example may equally have supported the more expressionistic, farcical and overtly theatrical work of Calmo and Giancarli.

Alongside Aretino, we have to mention a figure who is more shadowy to us. This is a native Venetian, Giovan Francesco Valier, whom Padoan links closely with *La Veniexiana*, and who might even be a candidate for its authorship. In fact, with great respect to Padoan, I have to say that I find his reasons for excluding Valier as author of *La Veniexiana* rather inadequate.[1] Equally, of course, there is no positive evidence that he did write the play.

Valier's writings – or possibly his *other* writings – have not survived,[2] perhaps partly because he died under a political cloud: he was hanged in the Piazzetta in 1542, the year of *La Talanta*, for allegedly betraying Venetian state secrets. Nevertheless, Padoan argues that he had a strong presence in the cultural life of his time as a storyteller and source for narrative *topoi*. He was particularly keen on using chronicle and real experience as a basis for literature. It can be further observed that he may have had an obsession with stories in which women insist on finding their own sexual fulfulment, at the expense of their legitimate partners if need be. This judgement is based as much as anything on the use made of his name by Ariosto in the *Orlando furioso*. Valier is alleged to be responsible for the overtly misogynistic *novella* interpolated into Canto 27 – the story of the girl Fiammetta who, taken as shared sexual partner by the two most handsome men in the world,

1 The arguments are based on Valier's firm documented championship of a standard literary language: this is held to be incompatible with the fact that *La Veniexiana* is written in dialects. However, I find it over-schematic to insist that such purism would necessarily be maintained in a composition which had no literary pretensions and was not intended for publication.

2 We know Valier largely through the references of other authors such as Ariosto and Sperone Speroni. For his character and presence, see Padoan 1974, 17-18; 24-5.

nevertheless cannot resist cuckolding them both, in the very bed which they all occupy, with a third lover. Whether Valier really invented or told the story is irrelevant: the point is that Ariosto felt that it was the sort of story he would have told. In the context of the total narrative of the *Furioso*, the tale has a tone which is not entirely hedonistic, and not at all pro-feminist. The message which it is intended to convey, as part of a general debate on female fidelity, is eagerly seized on and approved by the revengeful Rodomonte: that women are all the same, that they are sexually insatiable, and that men cannot trust them an inch. It is a message of aggressive mockery combined with resentment, of a sort which seems to characterise many examples of misogyny in Renaissance literature, including perhaps the character of Gasparo Pallavicino in *Il Libro del Cortegiano*.

But these remarks cannot remain in a void – we should start looking at the play which we want to discuss, and with which Giovan Francesco Valier was arguably associated in some way. *La Veniexiana* is classed by Padoan (in chapter 4 of his 1982 study) as *commedia cittadina* (city comedy). This is a phenomenon which nearly escaped the attentions of scholars altogether, because very few of its texts remain to be studied: the only two apart from *La Veniexiana* are comedies called *Ardelia* and *Crivello*, which survive in single manuscripts in the Biblioteca Marciana and neither of which (to my knowledge) has yet been printed.[3] According to Padoan's plausible account, groups of enthusiasts from the middle range of society mounted in their own homes private performances of comedies written for a Venetian context and a Venetian audience, plays which sometimes claimed to represent real events. The play *Ardelia* describes itself as "Non fabula, non comedia, non ficta scena, ma historia vera" (Not a fable, not a comedy, not a fictional scene, but a true history); and *La Veniexiana* similarly as "Non fabula, non comedia, ma vera historia" .[4] *Ardelia* (in prose) and *Crivello* (in

3 *La Veniexiana* and *Ardelia* are in cod. Marciano It. 1.288 (6072); *Crivello* is in Marciano It. 9.90 (6774). The tenuous nature of their survival is emphasised by the fact that *La Veniexiana* is now totally illegible without infra-red equipment, after some inept chemical treatment by its first modern editor.

4 *Crivello*, in a different manuscript, gets associated with these two by the (probable) appearance of the same name, Girolamo Zarotto, as actor in

verse with occasional prose passages) are both five-act comedies which can claim to belong to the new 'regular' classical mode. Both have conventional urban street settings (*Ardelia* in Venice; *Crivello*, interestingly, in Capodistria); and both have conventional stories of structured intrigue (*Ardelia* concentrating more on adultery; *Crivello* on marriages made possible by agnitions, but with a strong accompaniment of low-life sub-plot among the servants). Neither play has yet been the subject of a systematic study,[5] though both have special interest as theatrical documents. *Ardelia* is prefaced with some advice in Latin to actors, about how to render a suitable voice for each of the characters. The text of *Crivello* seems actually to be a working or prompt copy, with a cast list, and with a number of emendations carried out during rehearsals or performance.

La Veniexiana, on the other hand, is by now a well-known text. Since its rediscovery in the nineteenth century, and editing in 1928,[6] it has caught the imagination of Italian readers and critics and been regarded as a classic of Renaissance comedy, all the more valuable for the extra insights which it is deemed to gain by its refusal to conform to Plautine or Terentian patterns.

La Veniexiana bears out its claim to be "vera historia" by telling an extremely simple tale, with little conventional dramatic conflict and no real dénouement. Padoan, with a series of convincing historical arguments, has placed its composition in 1536, and even been able to claim that it refers in a not very veiled fashion to the doings of two real ladies from the Valier family (of which our Giovan Francesco was an illegitimate member) (1974). The fact that one of the female characters is named Valiera is obviously significant. Both Padoan and other commentators agree that it was performed (or intended for performance) to an all-male audience – a conclusion reached from the wording of its Prologue, which I shall eventually discuss. It tells of Iulio, a gentleman soldier from Lombardy passing through

Crivello and as transcriber of our single manuscript text of *La Veniexiana* – see Padoan 1982, 251-2.

5 *Ardelia* had in fact been edited by Annalisa Agrati for the Biblioteca degli Studi Mediolatini e Volgari (see 1994).

6 See Lovarini 1928. Many of Lovarini's tentative proposals about dating and provenance have been disproved by Padoan, who has also insisted on the spelling of the title now used in this essay.

Venice, who becomes the object of attention from two separate women. He courts the young dissatisfied wife Valiera, with the help of her maid; but the widow Angela is also after him, and she gets the Bergamask porter Bernardo to bring him to her house instead. Their night of love is dramatised in a remarkably frank way, with playful conversations of an intimate, and indeed anatomical, kind. Later Iulio visits Valiera: she has an outburst of rage and jealousy when she deduces that he has been first to another woman; but in spite of this she succumbs to Iulio's charms and admits him to her house. And that is all.

The writing of this play is unusual for its time, in a number of ways. Some scenes take place in the street, but others indoors. To take a detailed example: 3.2 seems to cover Iulio's transfer from his gondola into Angela's house, and then from the entrance into the mezzanine room. From then on, act 3 alternates between the bedroom where the lovers are, and the kitchen where Nena the maid and Bernardo the porter are waiting out the night. In the bedroom we see, or at least we hear, the intimate conversation and physical play between Iulio and Angela.

Changes of scene, and indoor settings in particular, run counter to all the models of Roman comedy which were so carefully observed by *commedia erudita*. However, they are the most crucial factor in enabling more intimate scenes, and especially scenes involving female emotions, to be plausibly dramatised. Women of respectable class were rarely able to wander freely in the public street, in Renaissance society, and certainly never transacted any interesting private business there (or in houses where they were not resident). In order to perform on stage with any degree of plausibility the things which women thought, felt and did, it was necessary to move the action to the domestic interior – as became normal in later centuries, for example in Molière or Goldoni. *La Veniexiana* moves rapidly and at will between the street (or Venetian *calle*) and both Valiera's and Angela's houses. This neglect of classical 'unity of place' (as it came to be called some time afterwards) is reminiscent of some bawdy Latin plays written in a university context in the previous century, such as the *Janus Sacerdos* – a play which echoes the scurrilous content and sexual frankness of *La Veniexiana*. Although Padoan

is reluctant to highlight this similarity (1974, 7),[7] I suggest that it should be borne more firmly in mind; and we should also remember that both university theatre and Venetian *commedia cittadina* were private performances, aimed plausibly at all-male audiences.

But how, in practical terms, was such a shifting action staged? It would, of course, present no serious problems to a modern director, using the scenic space and equipment of a purpose-built theatre and relying on the fact that a modern audience is willing to be flexible and accept a variety of spatial conventions. In 1536, performing in a private house, both space and scenery would have been very restricted. Would the audience have been prepared to accept modest resources, and use their imagination in the same way that we would? How far were upper-class theatre-goers already conditioned by the notion that a stage ought to represent a single fixed 'rational' space, corresponding to a Serlio-style perspective scenography?[8] Alternatively, in these less prestigious and pretentious circumstances, did they fall back on the more flexible approach of medieval staging, where the stage space shifted in the viewer's mind, in relation to individual moments of the drama? This is a type of question which we may never be in a position to answer. More serious, however, is the problem of how the love scene was staged – a scene in which the dialogue makes it unshakably clear that the lovers are actually in bed naked with one another. It is hard to believe that propriety would allow any degree of realism here, that amateur actors would strip naked in front of their gentlemanly friends and peers. Moreover, there is the problem of the gender of the performers. We cannot put a secure date on the first appearance of a professional female actor before a respectable Italian public –

7 Padoan tends to resist the links with 'goliardic' drama, on grounds of tone and content. About the tone of the play I am now making alternative proposals, which would lead to a different conclusion. I also find it difficult to ignore the play's total indifference to the customary fixed staging of 'regular' comedy during this period – a point which Padoan recognises but to which he attaches less importance.

8 Serlio's 'comic scene' was not published until 1545, in his *Secondo Libro di Perspettiva*; but it is generally accepted that he was doing no more than record the forms of staging which had already become standard for the new 'regular' drama.

the first one of which I know is 1548, in Lyon (Bryce 1988)[9] – but we do know that there were still huge inhibitions against the use of actresses, and that in an amateur performance in the 1530s they were quite unlikely to be accepted – especially if they had to strip off and perform extracts from a sexual encounter.

There is a mention in 2.4 of a *sopraçelo*, a canopy, to be placed over the bed in which the lovers are to meet. It is possible, therefore, that the actors retired behind the bed-curtains, and that all the intimacies were heard, but not seen, by the audience. This solution is easy enough to envisage on, for example, an Elizabethan English stage, where the bed could be wheeled out of the central door for the time that it was needed, and Nena and Bernardo could simultaneously sit and chat in another part of the stage. In a room in a private Venetian house, it is difficult to know whether such systems could be managed. The more one examines this problem, together with the other problems of rapid shifting between the street and the house, and between one house and another, the more we are forced to wonder whether this play was intended to be fully 'performed' at all, or whether it was meant to be merely 'recited', with the words taking precedence over actions – the equivalent, in modern terms, of a concert performance, rather than a fully staged performance, of an opera. An argument against this hypothesis is to be found in Padoan's very acute remarks, in his edition of 1974 (9-10), about the 'gestural' quality of many of the lines, the way in which they seem to indicate and indeed demand corporal and spatial performance. But this is an observation which can cut two ways. It might simply indicate that the author of the play had an instinctive ability to compose lines which suggest and convey movement and gesture, and which are therefore expressive enough in themselves, without needing to be accompanied by full bodily performance. In fact, the more one reads *La Veniexiana* and the more vivid its dialogue becomes in the mind, the more one is reminded of the effect of a well-written radio play, in which the dialogue carries all the action without any need of visual support.

9 Bryce quotes the memoirs of Pierre de Bourdeille, Seigneur de Brantôme, referring to "comédiens et comédientes". See now also essays nos. 8 and 9 in the present volume.

In the love scene in act 3, the practicalities of which have been exercising us so much, there is actually a discreet 'fade' to cover the act of love, precisely in the style of a modern radio drama (or indeed of a film), with the subsequent dialogue introduced in the manuscript by the Latin phrase *Aliquantulum postea* (A short while afterwards). (The fact that the stage directions are in Latin is another link with dramatic texts before 1500.) But this is not the only point where a verbal recitation, rather than full performance, would make more sense of the text. The cutting between street and street, and especially between one house and another, can be remarkably abrupt; and in particular there are some scenes which seem to end in mid-dialogue, with no obvious way of getting actors off the stage. In order to illustrate this, it is worth examining one scene which will also give a flavour of the play, and will serve as material for discussion of a different kind as well, after we have passed on from the physical problems of staging. These are extracts from 1.4, where we meet the widow Angela for the first time: she is furious and restless from general sexual deprivation, and from a growing passion for Iulio in particular. Her only release is to confide in her maid Nena, who ends up acting as a kind of sexual lightning conductor. The scene is headed, in the manuscipt: "Angela, Nena *in lecto*" (Angela and Nena in bed):[10]

> Angela Nena, dolce mea Nena, dòrmistu, fia?
> Nena Volea far un soneto, ché sun straca de voltarmi in questo benedeto leto.
> Angela Ti xè in leto, e mi nel fuogo che me consuma.
> Nena Che diséu de fuogo?
> Angela Le mie carne brusciano. Moro de doia.
> . . .
> Nena Disé un puoco zò che volé far.
> Angela Butarghe cussí le braze al colo, zicar quele lavrine e tegnirlo streto streto.
> Nena E po no altro?
> Angela La lenguina in bocca.

10 The English renderings of these extracts were presented at the Aberystwyth conference in a dramatic reading by two drama students: Caroline Mann and Elizabeth Nicholas.

NENA Meio lo saverave far mi, ca esso.
ANGELA Quela bochina dolce, tengirao per mi, cussí, sempre, sempre.
NENA Sté indrío, che me sofoghé!
ANGELA Caro, dolce pí che no xè el zucaro!
NENA Vu no v'arecordé che sun dona.
ANGELA Sun morta, mi. Sudo, in aqua, tuta.
NENA Gran mercé! Perché vu fé materíe.

. . .

ANGELA Vostu farme un piaser?
NENA Che?
ANGELA Cara, dolce, sta' cussí un poco; e po comenza a biastemar, azò che ti creda omo.
NENA Non sciò zò che dir, mi.
ANGELA Biastema el corpo de Cristo; menzona le parole sporche, co fa i òmeni.
NENA Disé… che parole?
ANGELA Quele sporcaríe che se dise in bordelo. No sastu?
NENA Se no dormo, le dirò. Ma, se dormo, non dirò gnente, mi.
ANGELA Cara Nena, fa' un puoco el sbisao, per mio amor!

[ANGELA Nena! Nena, my sweet! Are you asleep, my love? / NENA I wanted a little nap. I'm fed up with tossing in this blasted bed. / ANGELA You're in bed, and I'm burning in fire. / NENA What's that? Fire? / ANGELA My flesh is burning. The ache is killing me . . . / NENA Go on, say what you want to do to him. / ANGELA Put my arms round his neck like this, suck at his gorgeous lips, hug him tightly, tightly. / NENA Is that all? / ANGELA His tongue in my mouth. / NENA I could do that better than him. / ANGELA I'd keep it for myself for ever and ever, that sweet lovely mouth of his. / NENA Go away, you're suffocating me! / ANGELA Sweet as honey, sweet as sugar . . . / NENA You're forgetting I'm a woman. / ANGELA I'm dying, I'm soaked in sweat. / NENA I'm not surprised, the crazy things you're doing . . . / ANGELA Will you do something for me? / NENA What? / ANGELA Come on, sweetheart, stay like this a while; and then start swearing, so I can pretend you're a man. / NENA But I don't know what to say. / ANGELA Swear by the body of Christ, use dirty words like men do. / NENA Well… what words? / ANGELA Those dirty things they say in brothels—you know? / NENA I'll say them if I don't fall asleep. But if I'm asleep,

> I shan't say anything./ ANGELA Dearest Nena, play the bully boy, just a bit, just for me!]

Here, textually, the first act ends. If the play is fully staged, and if they really are in bed, then such an ending needs a lighting blackout (or a swift closure of the curtain) of which Renaissance stage technology would seem incapable, especially with the modest facilities of a private house.

It will be apparent by now that in an essay entitled "Staging *La Veniexiana*", I am not at all concerned with questions which might or might not face a modern director or designer. On the physical and technical level which we have covered so far, I do not think that many problems would arise, in the context of modern theatre. If we wanted to stage the play today, various ideas of design and spatial layout would suggest themselves: some would be easy to imagine, others might be surprising and interesting, but none of them would represent the overcoming of a major obstacle. The obstacles present themselves, on the contrary, when we try to imagine the play's first staging in 1536 or thereabouts – when inhibitions of taste, prejudices of theatrical dogma and habit, and sheer technical difficulties would all be immensely greater than we would face today. We cannot be sure how these problems would have been overcome: the only certain thing is that any staging of this particular comedy at the time when it was written would perforce have been radically different from that of any so-called 'regular' comedy in classical format.

The problems are not exhausted with our perception of these technical difficulties. I considered attaching as a sub-title to this paper the phrase: "How to ruin a perfectly good script". Once again, my suggestion is not that a modern director would take an old text and spoil it. On the contrary, I am proposing that the text which we think we read now, and to which the reactions of modern readers and critics tend to be so favourable, might well be ruined in our eyes if we consider the way in which it was interpreted and received on the occasion of its original performance. Any attempt at a plausible historical reconstruction leaves us, I would contend, with a severe and difficult interpretative dilemma.

Italian critics, and modern readers generally, have tended to be seduced by this comedy. Giorgio Padoan, in his Introduction, spends several pages extolling *minutiae* of realistic social background and characterisation, and – in contrast to some of the fantasies which are often proposed about Machiavelli's *Mandragola* – every point he makes is solid, and justified by a detailed quotation from the text. The script does indeed offer to the modern eye an astonishing amount of delicate emotional and psychological detail, as well as social and topographical precision. It is true, for example, that the Bergamask porter Bernardo, despite his roughness and his dialect, comes across to us simply as a human being rather than a caricature. The play contains no theatrical clichés whatever, either of character or of situation. We tend to perceive an effect of great authenticity and freshness; and this extends to reactions, as most critics now express them, to the vein of sensuality in the comedy – the material exemplified most of all by the central love scene, and also by the dialogue between Angela and Nena from which I have just quoted some extracts.

The kind of reaction which has built up around this material is typified by the following remark of Attilio Momigliano: "The fourth scene of act 1, where Angela's sexual craving is transfigured with such power of passion and of poetry, is a masterpiece to bear comparison with any celebrated scene of erotic theatre from any age" (1934, 267);[11] and by D. Valeri's comment, in his edition of the play, that "there is a certain refinement [*gentilezza*], a certain nobility, in the feelings of these two women "*folles de leurs corps*"; there is the melancholy which goes with sensuality" (1968).[12] Such reactions do not exclude an element of laughter in a spectator, in response to the extravagances which the women commit, but what is proposed is a laughter of recognition, even a kind of solidarity. In fact the average modern reader receives the intense sensuality of the two women protagonists as a rueful but essentially sympathetic depiction of an excess which anyone might share – male readers at least (I have yet to read the reaction of a female critic) regard

11 English translations of all Italian critical remarks are my own.

12 The phrase "*folles de leurs corps*" appears in French, italicised, in the original.

many scenes in *La Veniexiana* as being full of accurate insight into female passion. The consensus view was summed up with less sentimental rhetoric by Lodovico Zorzi in his edition of the play, where he says of the anonymous author: "although he does not side with any of the characters, he surrounds them all with a single light of sympathy, which blocks . . . any tendency towards satire or sarcasm" (1965, 114; "Se pure non parteggia per nessuno dei personaggi, li avvolge tutti in una comune luce di simpatia, che tronca . . . ogni velleità di satira o di sarcasmo). And a little later Zorzi refers to the author's "emotional cordiality towards the characters" (116; affettiva cordialità verso i personaggi").

(This, indeed, was the way in which the student actresses interpreted the scene when this paper was read at the conference – they responded with full twentieth-century sensibility to the way in which the script naturally presents itself to the twentieth-century mind).

At the risk of spoiling people's pleasure, we may need to say that while such a reaction to the text is now our privilege, it may also be an anachronism. To pick up the words of my proposed subtitle again, I am suggesting that what we now tend to regard as "a perfectly good script" would be spoiled for us by the way in which it was originally conceived and staged. Let us remember various facts and propositions about the play, which were stated at the beginning of this paper. *La Veniexiana* was intended, it seems, for performance in a close club atmosphere to an all-male audience, and as far as we know also by an all-male cast. It is associated with, and could just conceivably have been written by, Giovan Francesco Valier: a man known to his contemporaries not for solidarity with the female sex, but rather for ruthless denigration of women's alleged 'infidelity' towards the men who, in society's view, were their masters and owners. In these circumstances it seems very probable that the whole performance was an excuse for the female sex to be mocked by a male coterie. In our reading today, from 1.4, we heard female performers depicting live women, exaggerating their sexual urges for comic effect but still expressing a certain collusion with those urges. In 1536, the audience may have been faced with male performers in drag – not a controlled caricature of women by women, but some grotesque equivalent of Jack Lemmon in the film

Some Like It Hot. Our actresses gave us a rather nice comic script: the actors for whom it was originally written would probably have offered an aggressive travesty.[13]

The Prologue to *La Veniexiana* is equally capable of being read in the same sour misogynistic tone. It says that the play will demonstrate how women are not merely objects of desire ("amate"), but pursuers of love just like the men addressed in the audience ("amanti insieme cun voi") – taking up a controversy which was current in dialogues on the theory of love.[14] However, statements like that, when made by males about females, are not always sympathetic. If it is right to associate Giovan Francesco Valier in some way with this text, and if the atmosphere of the evening was something like that of an twentieth-century all-male sports club, then to depict women as pursuers rather than pursued could be intended as an insult – possibly (as many feminist critics will be eager to add) concealing an element of fear. To male spectators, Angela's wrigglings on the bed with Nena, as well as the anatomical play in act 3, could be performed in a derisive and also prurient spirit. We may also have to read in a similar way Valiera's total surrender of self-respect in act 5, when she succumbs to her desire for Iulio in spite of her knowledge that he has recently been to bed with Angela. In 4.5 she perceives this fact almost at once, reacts perfectly normally, and sends Iulio away in a combination of pain, fury and sarcasm. Next morning, however, we see her maid Oria out on the streets telling us the following: "ORIA Iersera Madona era scorazàa cun Missier Iulio e non l'ha volesto a parte nissuna; adesso essa xè rabiosa, e lo vul, o vivo o morto . . ." (5.1; ORIA Last night my mistress was

13 *Decades after composing this essay, I have to intervene on my own work with an alternative view which I had not thought of in 1993. In this private performance in Venice, the female roles may indeed have been played by male actors. Alternatively, however, the parts may have been entrusted (if that is the word) to hired female prostitutes. This would not undermine completely my conclusions about the misogyny expressed by the text; but it would considerably alter the overall character of the occasion.*

14 Padoan quotes the *Dialogo d'Amore* of Sperone Speroni, which puts men as the pursuers and women as the pursued – "meritamente loro amate e noi amanti nominaremo" (1974, 71; we shall rightly name them [the women] as 'beloved' and ourselves as 'lovers').

furious with Master Iulio, and wouldn't have him at any price. Now she's on heat, and she wants him dead or alive . . .).

The only reason for the change of heart seems to be sheer physical lust: no other motivation is alluded to. Iulio, more predictably, is easily persuaded to find an excuse to drop Angela: "andarò a Valiera per mutar cibo" (I'll go to Valiera for a change of diet) (5.3). When Iulio and Valiera do meet again, in 5.6, both very carefully avoid any mention of Angela or of jealousy, and Valiera's capitulation is total and explicit: "Valiera Vu savè ben che pena m'avè dà, perché ho volesto esserve mazora. Ma da qua avanti voio esserve menora in ogni canto" (Valiera You know what pain you caused me, because I wanted to rule over you. But from now on, I want to submit to you in every respect). Iulio then makes conventional protestations that he is now her slave and she can therefore command him. However, this is obligatory rhetoric for a lover who wants to sound like a gentleman; and the fact is that he has not surrendered anything, while Valiera has lost every vestige of dignity.

In this context, when the Prologue speaks of women being "amanti" as well as "amate", it can be seen as a contemptuous statement that women are slaves to their animal urges, "on heat", "*rabiose*" – they are utterly unable to control themselves, and they always in the end lie down before the almighty irresistible phallus. A thesis which seems quite typical of Giovan Francesco Valier, as we see him through the eyes of Ariosto. In performance, male actors in drag could caricature unmercifully such a view of the female sex, and perform in a style from which all tenderness would be banished. (*Hired prostitute actresses would have to conform to whatever tones and actions were prescribed by their male clients*).

Some may see this as an extreme view of *La Veniexiana*; but it may at least need to be offered as a corrective, in a move towards a more accurate picture of the play's original performance. However, the historical reconstruction, which 'spoils' the text which we previously thought we were dealing with, need not make us abandon the other ways which we have found, with our modern preferences and our sensitivities, of reading the words which we now find on the page. In particular, I should not want our actresses to feel that they have been set up on this occcasion in order to be found wanting, or that their interpretation is being presented

as 'incorrect'. It is not incorrect at all, for a modern performance, because for us the words on the page are honestly capable of submitting to such a reading. The attractive subtleties which have been discovered in *La Veniexiana* can still stand, for us; and we should feel no qualms about developing our perceptions of them, even in despite of the dramatist's likely intentions. It would not be the first time that an author wrote better than he knew – nor would it be the only example of a Renaissance text which contains a concealed and possible unconscious sensitivity, tending to subvert its surface meaning and its intended message. We might have in future to pursue discussions on *La Veniexiana* similar to those which are now long familiar in relation to Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, or *Henry V*. We may rehabilitate and redeem Angela and Nena, if we so choose, in the same way as we sometimes rehabilitate Katherina and Shylock. It is in the nature of theatre scripts to come up with such possibilities occasionally. All we must do is recognise a firm distinction between, on the one hand, a plausible historical reconstruction, and, on the other hand, a legitimate modern re-working of what we find a text capable of expressing. The first is the province of the theatre historian; the second is the privilege of the contemporary theatre practitioner.

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8

Female Presences on Stage. The Actress and the Female Singer in the Cinquecento and Seicento*

The history of the female presence on the Renaissance stage has not been addressed as a subject in its own right by Italian scholars, and one is left with the impression that the importance of the question has been underestimated. This neglect relates on the one hand to the development of female roles in theatre scripts and opera libretti – but also on the other hand to the emergence of women as professional actresses and singers. In the case of actresses, what has not been emphasised is how exceptional their existence is, in a world context. There is a limited number of really developed theatrical cultures, among the various human civilisations; but it is only the modern European one which has been distinct, almost from its beginnings, by the presence and even the domination of the female star performer. In China and Japan, all acting in culturally prestigious forms of theatre has been traditionally assigned to men, at least until the twentieth century (Brandon 1993).[1] In those countries and in India, select male actors have specialised in performing female roles, and have immersed themselves in that function to the point, in some cases, of adopting female social identity off stage as well.[2]

* This English translation of the published Italian text has been revised and expanded.

1 In so-called 'Peking Opera' *(Jing-ju)*, and analogous genres, women were only admitted as performers in the 1920s, during the first Chinese Republic. For certain types of Chinese regional theatre, touring companies could be composed either entirely of men or entirely of women. Actors in the Japanese *No* and *Kyogen* theatre have always been male: in *Kabuki*, women were officially banned from the stage in 1629 (and boys in 1652), during the very first years of the new genre. My information comes from the *Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*, and has been confirmed by Leeds colleagues Li Ruru (daughter of Li Yuru, one of the first female stars of *Jing-ju*), and Masako Yuasa.

2 In the Japanese Edo period (17th-19th centuries), the female

The situation in India is complicated by the multiplicity of cultures and languages, and also by the existence in Hindu communities of social and religious castes which also become professional castes; but there too, in a majority of traditional theatre forms, performing has been reserved for males until the twentieth century. Only in Europe – and to be precise, only in post-Renaissance Europe, because it was not the case in ancient Greece and Rome – do we find a theatrical 'high culture', musical and non-musical, which has been based to a great extent on the presence of female performers and on their ability to attract and fascinate an audience. From Europe, of course, the rule of the female 'star' has been transferred to America and 'western' culture in general; and from the theatre to the cinema and television.

Historians know, though they rarely dwell on the fact, that the phenomenon of the actress, as well as the genre of stage opera, originated in 16th-century Italy. The profession of Kiri te Kanawa descends from that of Vittoria Archilei; and neither Sarah Bernhardt nor Marilyn Monroe could have existed without the pioneering presence of Isabella Andreini. Something happened in Renaissance and Baroque Italy to persuade high society and a cultured public to accept and applaud women who displayed themselves on stage in dramatic roles. All the prejudices against such exibitions, prejudices which continued to be forcefully expressed, yielded, it seems, in the face of. . . of what? Of cultural pressures and choices which we are not yet fully able to narrate or analyse. However, if we do not know exactly what happened, or why it happened, we do at least know in what period it happened. For the purposes of this essay it is possible to identify a point of departure and a point of arrival. (An overall chronology of the story I am now narrating appears at the end of this essay).

impersonators *(onnagata)* were the object of cult attention, often expressed in artistic depictions of their life-style. Their craft is hereditary and still current: the *onnagata* Nakamura Ganjirô III and his Kabuki company toured Britain in the summer of 2001. The films *Ba Wang Bie Ji/Farewell My Concubine* (Hong Kong/China 1993, directed by Chen Kaige), and *Daayraa/The Square Circle* (India 1996, directed by Amol Palekar) both deal in their respective cultures with male actors who adopt female social roles. In *Daayraa*, the actor playing the part belonged himself to that group.

The point of departure can be 13 January 1525, in Florence. Niccolò Machiavelli is organising the first performance of his comedy *Clizia*, in the house of his friend Falconetti, to celebrate the return of that friend from a period of political exile. The comedy is called *Clizia*, but the character of that name – the 'heroine', if that term is appropriate – never appears on stage. All the other characters of the story compete, argue, and plot, to decide Clizia's fate behind her back, in her absence. Moreover, current social and theatrical convention dictates that all the performers in the production have to be male: the only female character, the very important one of the matron Sofronia, has to be played by a man. The only woman who will appear before the audience is Barbara Raffacani Salutati, known as "Barbara Fiorentina", a well-known and admired singer and courtesan. She will sing, in the intervals between the acts, madrigals set to music by Philippe Verdelot. These interludes may perhaps comment obliquely on the action of the comedy, but they will not occur within the fictitious world evoked by the drama – they will not be part of the *fabula*.[3]

My chosen point of arrival is 28 May 1608, eighty-three years later. Claudio Monteverdi is composing in Mantua his new opera *Arianna*, to celebrate the wedding of Crown Prince Francesco, son of the Gonzaga Duke, to Margherita of Savoy. The opera is entitled *Arianna*, and the character of that name not only appears on stage but occupies the public's principal attention, most of all with her famous *Lamento* aria (the only item from this opera of which the music, as well as the text, has survived to this day). To perform the role of Arianna, Monteverdi chooses a woman better known as an actress than as a singer: Virginia Andreini Ramponi, stage name "Florinda", wife of the actor-manager Giovan Battista Andreini (and therefore daughter-in-law of the formidable Isabella, the most celebrated actress of the age, who had died just four years earlier in 1604). Virginia must have been capable of facing the musical demands of the role, because the success of that first performance is legendary in opera history.[4]

3 These facts, reconstructed chiefly by Roberto Ridolfi from Machiavelli's own letters, are now commonplace in commentaries on *Clizia*.

4 These facts too are fully accepted. Virginia Andreini Ramponi was

In eighty-three years, therefore, we pass from a comedy whose central female character could not appear on stage, and could not express herself dramatically, to a composition in which the presence of the heroine and the expression of her emotions was absolutely essential. We move from a theatre convention which forbade women to act, to a theatre market where the audience required the participation of a 'diva' as perhaps the most important contribution to the show. We also move from a woman of easy sexual morals, probably effectively a prostitute, who regularly sang madrigals in public but never acted or sang in a dramatic role, to a woman married into a theatrical family who was equally competent in sung and in spoken theatre (and in her case, 'spoken theatre' means that she was able both to improvise from a scenario and to perform a written script). Clearly in tracing the course of this revolution – and 'revolution' is not too strong a word – we have to distinguish two different issues: the development of female roles on stage, and the emergence of female performers. The example of Shakespeare's theatre reminds us that one can have the first without the second: Juliet and Cleopatra were played by highly-trained professional boys. So I shall look at roles first, perhaps more briefly, and then at performers.

1. Female Roles in Cinquecento Theatre[5]

If we go back to Machiavelli's *Clizia*, we find that the author himself insists in the Prologue on the unsuitability of bringing the character of Clizia on stage:

> Questa favola si chiama *Clizia*, perché cosí ha nome la fanciulla che si combatte. Non aspettate di vederla, perché Sofronia, che l'ha allevata, non vuole per onestà che la venga fuora.
>
> [This story is called *Clizia*, because that is the name of the girl who is being fought over. Don't expect actually to see her; because

chosen after the unexpected death of a younger singer, Caterina Martinelli. For a feminist analysis of the *Lamento* itself, see Cusick 1994a.

5 For the treatment of female characters generally in Renaissance comedy, see also Andrews (1997), essay no. 6 in this present volume.

> Sofronia, who has brought her up, won't let her come outside as a matter of decency.]

This "decency" (*onestà*) is both a social and a theatrical convention. To bring the girl on stage would mean, in the story, allowing her to appear on the public street – and would therefore mean compromising her reputation, according to strict Florentine criteria of female respectability. The prohibition could even be seen as a piece of artistic realism: humanist theatre hoped to represent accurately the real behaviour of contemporary society, and therefore preferred not to present on stage what was unlikely in real life. But at the same time, Machiavelli was also carefully imitating his literary models, in this case the Roman comedies of Plautus and Terence. Roman society of the centuries just before the Common Era operated through the same taboos as 16th-century Florence did. There too, if the character of a young woman of respectable family came out on to the stage, and therefore on to the 'street' of the fiction, she became compromised as far as a happy ending was concerned, if that ending were to be a respectable marriage. If Roman comedies contain 'heroines' (which is not always the case), then those characters remain shut indoors for the whole of the play: the most obvious example is perhaps the character of Filumena in Terence's *Hecyra*, who undergoes rape, marriage, involuntary maternity, and then reconciliation with the husband who is responsible for all three, without ever appearing before the audience to explain her sufferings or her point of view. So humanist playwrights had two complementary reasons – artistic realism and social convention – for not developing their female roles, especially the roles of young respectable nubile women. In Florence in particular it is striking, even on a superficial reading, how 'erudite comedy' does not in fact provide many roles of this sort. More experimental in this sense were comedies written for Urbino, in 1513, and then in Siena under the aegis of the Accademia degli Intronati. It was this last group who introduced into their plots, alongside the usual borrowings from Roman comedy and from scurrilous medieval *novella*, elements from romance narrative which highlighted the figure of the virtuous young woman who was misjudged, abandoned or persecuted: Lelia in *Gl'ingannati* (1532),

or Lucrezia in *Amor costante* (1563-1540). But these tendencies were not immediately followed elsewhere in the Italian peninsula; and 'regular' Italian comedies of the sixteenth century contain very few romantic heroines. Such exceptions as we find include many who adopt male disguise, in order to provide a theatrical if not social rationale for their appearing in public. It is a fact, and it is relevant to the present inquiry, that the few heroines who appear in comedy tend to devote most of their dramatic expression to displays of pathos: their longest speeches are often laments against Fortune, or against their mistreatment by a lover. Even in the comic genre, a heroine had to suffer a little, and the emotional interest was mainly sustained by their sufferings. The lamenting heroine had in fact a long literary history prior to the sixteenth century, though not yet a stage history. Almost all the works of Boccaccio which pre-date the *Decameron* make room for long pathetic speeches delivered by heroines; and in fact in his *Fiammetta* he expands this 'micro-genre' of the Lament into a full-length book.[6]

So Italian comedy, which contributed so much to European theatre, tended at this time not to develop the figure of the strong, tender woman, morally and emotionally mature, who appears instead in Shakespeare and then in French comedy. For the Italian comic heroine one has to wait for Goldoni in the eighteenth century, and even Goldoni's treatment of female protagonists has its ambiguities for a feminist reader or spectator. But this relative exclusion of female roles from the stage occurs less in theatrical genres distinct from comedy. In tragedy women are foregrounded in heroic vein: it has been noted that more than two-thirds of Italian Renaissance tragedies have the name of a woman as their title. Tragic heroines also, almost by definition, tend to do a lot of lamenting, in formally rhetorical speeches; whether they are passive victims (like Sofonisba and Marianna) or more active participants

6 For the role of the Lament in the nascent genre of opera, see Rosand 1991, 361-86. Rosand insists in particular on links between the Lament and scenes of madness: "Lamenting characters . . . were released from the bonds of decorous behaviour by the intensity of their feelings, which verged on – and often culminated in – madness" (382-3). See also the long Chapter 6 on "The Lament" in Sternfeld 1993, 140-197; and the second chapter, "Women who Lament", in Heller 1995.

in their own drama (like Orbecche, Antigone, Dido, Cleopatra, or the proto-Juliet who is Luigi Groto's Adriana).

It is actually surprising that this list does not already include an Ariadne/Arianna abandoned by a Theseus/Teseo; but despite the large number of abandoned heroines in *novelle* and chivalric poems, often implicitly compared to Ariadne, this particular story does not seem to have been dramatised in a surviving script by any Italian before Monteverdi himself. The role was nevertheless eventually included in the repertoire of improvising actresses from the *commedia dell'arte*. In the Compagnia dei Confidenti, two women competed with each other in offering virtuoso 'mad scenes', and that of "Lavinia" (Marina Dorotea Antonazzi) was in the role of Arianna. Relevant documentation comes in a letter of 1618 (Ferrone 1993, 154);[7] so we cannot be sure whether it was actually Monteverdi's opera of 1608 which inspired versions of this story for improvised spoken theatre, or theatre scenarios which suggested a theme for an opera. Either way, we can see a possible network of mutual influences between two theatrical genres, which could then be significant in the light of what we shall then have to say about actresses and singers.

Meanwhile, during the Cinquecento, in order to explore female emotions on stage in a lighter and less demanding style, dramatists (and, as we shall see, actresses) had turned to a new theatrical genre, created by the Renaissance itself: the pastoral. On the "woodland stage" (*scena boschereccia*), stage time was devoted equally to nymphs and to shepherds. The plot of pastoral plays revolved most often around the question of whether a woman resisted or yielded to a man's advances; and the dialogue between the lovers was always foregrounded, never ceding its priority to practical jokes, family intrigues, or exchanges of identity. All the dramatic situations which can be produced by a love story – scenes of courtship and refusal, lovers' quarrels, soliloquies of passion or uncertainty – found their home in the stylised fantasy Arcadia which was the usual setting, a home which the social realism

7 In addition, on 268n75 of the same Ferrone volume, we find that a manuscript text called *L'Arianna, commedia*, attributed to Antonazzi, is in the Brera Library, Milan.

aimed for by comedy had never been able to provide. And from its beginnings pastoral had made use of music, had been musical theatre as well as other things;[8] so that the passionate speech, the lover's plea, the monologue of joy or of despair, all had a tendency to turn into songs, even into 'arias', long before the formal advent of what we now recognise as opera.

Therefore Arianna's famous *Lamento* already had, in 1608, clear antecedents in literature and drama; but the history of female theatre roles is not entirely simple. Our point of departure, let us remember, was the underplayed Clizia in Machiavelli, never seen or related to by the spectators. For the early humanist playwrights, a woman on stage, even within the fiction of the play, was a controversial figure subject to inhibitions and controls. Arianna and her sisters in fiction won their place on the stage with some effort, and managed to do so most of all with the help of new forms of theatre (among which we must list opera itself) which had no exact equivalent in antiquity.

2. The Actress and the Female Singer

As we have seen, the part of Arianna in Monteverdi's opera was sung by a woman, Virginia Andreini Ramponi. To us now, with hindsight, this might seem an inevitable, almost biological, choice: a sung female role, in our view, demands a female voice, soprano or contralto. We must therefore recognise that other solutions were actually possible, and even accepted as routine, granted that in many types of Renaissance music female voices were not used at all. Church choirs were still composed only of men and boys, except in the special case of all-female choirs in nunneries and orphanages. There was a long tradition, from the middle ages and even earlier, of training young boys as sopranos, of teaching mature men to sing falsetto – and, of course, of preserving a boy's voice by the expedient of castration (Rosselli 1988). The oriental

8 This point is emphasised in Pieri 1983. Studies of Italian opera by David Kimbell (e.g. 1991 in the Works Cited section), or his entries in the *Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (1996), also stress the importance of its roots in pastoral.

theatre traditions, to which I alluded at the start, remind us that it is humanly and culturally possible to create a musical theatre performed entirely by men and boys. In early modern Europe, in the very few examples of opera performance prior to 1608, a female performer had not always been used. It is not totally clear who sang the women's parts in the *Dafne* of 1598, by Peri and Corsi, nor in the *Dafne* of 1608 by Marco da Gagliano. The rather brief role of Euridice in the opera of that name by Peri and Caccini (1600) was sung by Caccini's own sister-in-law; and other women of his family (including his daughter Francesca, the future composer) contributed to the ensemble singing; but other female roles were taken by boys and by castrati. For Monteverdi's *Orfeo* of 1607, the whole cast may have been male (Fenlon 1986, 16).[9]

In sixteenth-century Italy in general, if we read the accounts of court spectacles of the first decades which involved music, especially in the Ferrara of Dukes Ercole I and Alfonso I, we find that many female roles in allegorical interludes were sung by boys and danced by men in female dress. Then later, without there being any explanation which we can currently trace, there emerged in court circles an interest in, and even a preference for, women's singing voices. The example of "Barbara Fiorentina", who sang Machiavelli's madrigals in 1525, shows that some women did already sing professionally in public, and could be used in particular circumstances. But we are not yet able to narrate how (and when, and why) women became accepted in roles which combined singing with the performance of a dramatic role – initially, perhaps, as a member of a dramatic chorus, as in the case of the Peri/Caccini *Euridice*. We cannot narrate either how it was that female singers acquired even a modest level of social respectability, such as to remove them at least a little from being categorised automatically as prostitutes or courtesans, which was undoubtedly Barbara Fiorentina's own position. Here we can do no more than sketch in a few individual stages in that story, and perhaps most importantly draw attention to the existence of the problem.

9 An incomplete cast list is proposed here, with all female roles provisionally assigned to male singers.

The only attempt known to me which deals with the history of professional female singers in the sixteenth century is an article by the musicologist Anthony Newcomb, published in 1986 in an American collection of essays on women in music.[10] Newcomb is fully conscious of the novelty of the phenomenon, and of the prejudices against which women musicians had to struggle. But he is an expert principally in the history of the madrigal,[11] and he traces the development of what at that time was called *musica secreta* – that is what we would now call chamber concerts, offered to small audiences in court salons or in private houses. His article deals much less with the female singer on stage, in what we might perhaps choose to call *musica publica*. The event which interests Newcomb most is the creation in the court of Ferrara, in 1581, by the Este Duke Alfonso II, of a "Concerto di Dame" – a group of women chosen for their musical ability, and employed (that commercial word seems justified here) to sing polyphonic music in private rooms for guests of the court. Court ladies in Renaissance Italy had always been required to have some minimal ability to sing; but Newcomb underlines the innovation in the fact that the presence at the Este court of Laura Peverara, Anna Guarini and Livia d'Arco (the first members of the group) was due exclusively to their musical talent, and not to their social position or to other personal qualities. We can see here an important step in the direction of fully professional women singers: and Newcomb shows how in Ferrara and then in other courts the foundation of the Concerto di Dame encouraged some more women, especially the daughters or wives of male musicians, to become something approaching professionals without necessarily sinking to the social level of 'public women'. We can also add from other sources that Giulio Caccini trained up his first female vocal ensemble in Florence in the 1580s, in explicit rivalry to the group in Ferrara. The women concerned were largely members of his own family or household, and thus protected

10 See Works Cited for the Newcomb reference. See also the third chapter of Rosselli 1992: a study which covers the whole history down to the twentieth century, and which admits the relative lack of information on the first female singers of the Cinquecento.

11 He had already published a two volume study: see Newcomb 1980.

from social infamy by operating constantly under his patriarchal protection (*New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, s.v. "Giulio Caccini"). In fact the most important way of preserving the reputation of a woman musician of any kind was to make sure that she was seen to function as a member of a family unit.

However, in these early decades, the development of women singers in *musica secreta* seems to proceed in parallel with, and not necessarily to be identified with, the emergence of women who actually sang on stage, rather than for small private audiences. This is a phenomenon which Anthony Newcomb does not directly study. We know that in the famous Florentine Interludes of 1589 (that is, at the end of the same decade in which both the Ferrarese and the Florentine Concerti di Dame were formed), many female figures both dramatic and allegorical were impersonated and sung by women. The best known name is perhaps that of Vittoria Archilei, who continues the family-based pattern by being the wife of a singer and lutenist from Rome: she continued her glittering career well into the next century. The presence on stage of women singers seems to have created no scandal at all in 1589, to judge by the many descriptions of the event; but we cannot say for how long the practice had been established in entertainments of this sort. For example Nino Pirrotta, in his seminal study of 1975 on Renaissance stage music, abstains from an opinion on the presence or otherwise of female singers in the Florentine interludes of 1565 (for the comedy *La cofanaria* by Francesco D'Ambra) and 1567 (for *I Fabii* by Lotto Del Mazza) (chap. 5).[12] Tim Carter has since recorded that in 1565 Giulio Caccini, as a boy, was imported from Rome to sing the female role of Psyche. However, the participation of women in the 1589 show seems taken so much for granted by the chroniclers that the battle, if battle there was, seems to have been fought and won well before that year. There is disagreement now between scholars as to whether Renaissance court interludes should be seen or not as true forerunners of opera; but whatever position we adopt in what seems to me to be a purely semantic

12 Trans. Karen Eales as *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi* (see Pirrotta 1982).

argument,[13] nothing prevents us from suggesting that the first female singers who took dramatic stage roles could have begun their careers and gained early experience in those same interludes.

More mysterious, and insufficiently studied (up to 1999), is the history of the Renaissance actress, who performed in non-musical theatre both scripted and improvised. It is a surprising fact that we do not know for sure just when in the sixteenth century actresses were introduced on to the public stage. It is even more surprising that the actor and practitioner Pier Maria Cecchini, writing in 1614, does not seem to have known the answer to this question either – even though he realised that actresses were a controversial subject, and a fundamental element in the profession as he knew it. In his *Discourses on Comedies*, he writes:

> . . . non sono 50 anni, che si costumano donne in Scena & vi si introdussero; poi che di necessità intervengono quasi in ogni importante caso, ch'al mondo succede; & se bene in suo luoco vi potevano capir giovanetti, tuttavia fu concluso esser assai meglio, & di manco scandalo la donna; poiché ben guardata, e dalla propria honestà e dall'interesse dell'honor del marito, si sarebbero fuggiti quei scandali che possono esser partoriti dalla libertà di quel garzone, che fuori di casa può incontrarsi in persona, che con parole virtuose lo conducesse in luoco dove si consumassero fatti vitiosi . . . (Cecchini 1614; qtd in Pandolfi 1958, 3.358)

> [. . . it is less than fifty years since women were introduced on stage and have since appeared regularly; granted that they inevitably play their part in every important event which happens in the world. And although it was possible to use boys instead, nevertheless it was decided that women were a better and less scandalous solution. Because if they were properly supervised, in respect of their own decency and their husbands' honour, then one could avoid those scandals which can arise from the freedom given to a boy actor, who outside his own home might run into people who would inveigle him with virtuous-sounding words into places where vicious acts are performed . . .]

13 See Chapter 2, "Definitions and Non-Definitions", in Sternfeld 1993.

We note once again in passing the emphasis on the need for patriarchal family supervision; but the main point here is that Cecchini's calculation of "less than fifty years" since the appearance of actresses is not only vague, but probably also inaccurate. In fact the first appearances of actresses are wrapped in a degree of mystery, and documented cases are isolated and sparse.

The first relevant date currently known is 1548, and therefore more than fifty years before Cecchini made his estimation in 1614. In September of that year, a company of Italian actors was invited to Lyons, in France, by the Italian community resident there, to perform for King Henri II and Queen Caterina de' Medici the comedy *La Calandra* by Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena.[14] Among the many written reports of this splendid event, one by a noble French diarist, the Seigneur de Brantôme, contains crucial information:

> J'ay ouy dire à plusieurs seigneurs et dames, que si la tragi-comédie de ce grand cardinal fut belle, elle fut aussi très-bien représentée par les **comédiens et comédientes, qui estoient très-belles, parloient très-bien et de fort bonne grâce;** et estoit accompagnée de force intermédies et faintes, qu'ils contentaient infiniment le roy, la reyne et toute leur court. (Lalanne 1867, 3.256-8; emphasis added)
>
> [I heard it said by several lords and ladies that this great Cardinal's tragi-comedy, as well as being very good, was also very well performed by the **actors and actresses, who** [the actresses] **were very pretty, and spoke very well and eloquently**; and it was accompanied by a number of interludes and sketches, so as to give infinite pleasure to the king, the queen and their whole court.]

Brantôme was too young to be present in 1548, and is passing on what he has been told – including the inaccurate description of the play performed as a "tragi-comedy". About the presence of women performers, however, he seems convinced that what he was told by "several lords and ladies" is circumstantial enough to be accurate.

Unfortunately our knowledge about the Italian company involved is limited. It was put together, or found for the purpose,

14 A full edited account of this whole event is in Scève 1997. However, its editor Richard Cooper does not investigate the question of female performers.

by a man called Domenico Barlachia, or Barlacchi, currently town-crier of Florence and described as "arguto e vivace animatore di allegre brigate" (lively and witty inspirer of merry companies) (Zapperi 1964).[15] If it was a group already existing with its own title, and open to being invited to perform for a specific event as far away as France, then it was probably a professional company; and it seems unlikely that it did not already contain actresses with a certain amount of experience. In that case, this year of 1548 is not the inaugural moment which we should like to discover: the episode tells us that in 1548 a company containing actresses already existed, or at least could easily be assembled. We should also note that *La Calandra* was a well-known play, first performed in 1513, and available in a fully written script. It was not a scenario for improvisation. It is also necessary to note that the show which was delivered in Lyon (as the account of Maurice Scève makes clear) included "interludes and sketches" (*intermédies et faintes*) which were not part of Bibbiena's original script, speeches some of which were assigned to female figures. It is not clear whether the *comédientes* were restricted to reciting these passages, or whether the more scurrilous female roles in the comedy were also performed by women. Nevertheless, we have confirmed from a very early date the flexibility of professional players, both male and female, and their ability to deliver memorised scripts rather than just improvise from scenarios.

Who were the first actresses? How did they manage to be culturally and socially accepted, in the face of enormous crushing prejudices? Again, we can only hazard guesses, rather than being sure. The only relevant proposal made so far is that of Ferdinando Taviani, in a study of the *commedia dell'arte* published in 1982. Taviani suggests that there has to be a link between techniques of theatrical improvisation, which we know to have been a central element in the earliest Italian professional theatre, and techniques

15 The Compagnia della Cazzuola, of which Barlacchia was an "aderente" according to Vasari, was not a company of actors (and therefore *not*, as has sometimes been claimed, the group which was sent to Lyons): it was indeed an "allegra brigata" or social club composed both of noblemen and artisans, in which it does not appear there was any function at all for women (see the "Life" of Giovanfrancesco Rustici in Vasari 1973, 6.611-12).

of literary improvisation which we know to have been cultivated by high-class prostitutes, the so-called *cortigiane oneste* (Taviani and Schino 1982, 331-4).[16] So according to a thesis which is certainly plausible, the first actresses would have been like Machiavelli's Barbara Fiorentina: 'public women' who had nothing to lose by exhibiting themselves on stage, and whose social role already demanded a range of entertainment talents: singing, dancing, reciting verse, and also the impromptu composition of verbal and poetic texts.

This brings us round in a circle, and makes us ask what link there might have been between the phenomenon of the first actresses and that of female singers in early opera. Embarking upon this study, I had hoped to put together enough documented facts for a fairly simple thesis. The desire to use women in sung drama, I imagined, would have been based on the simple biological fact that women possessed women's voices, and thus could be more plausible vocally and dramatically in female roles. Then the fact that female singers were already being used would have broken down some of the social prejudice against women exhibiting themselves, and would have made it easier for people to accept the presence of female performers in spoken roles too. This remains an attractive theory, but it is difficult to prove, because of the absence of any firm dates on either side. In fact the opposite thesis has been proposed. Anthony Newcomb, in the article already referred to, taking the foundation of the Concerto di Dame in Ferrara as his only sure date of reference, suggests that it was the prior existence of actresses which offered a precedent for the acceptance of female singers; because he notes, quite correctly, that some actresses whose names are still known were functioning from around 1550 onwards, whereas the Ferrarese Concerto di Dame was founded in 1581 (1986, 102-4). However, his theory is less convincing in its turn on chronological grounds if we accept the probability that women were already singing in staged court interludes earlier in the second half of the century. The ladies in Duke Alfonso's Concerto were indeed a new phenomenon, in that

16 In the various studies which exist on Italian courtesans, 'honest' or not, I have found no detailed account of this phenomenon of literary improvisation.

they were recruited as more or less 'full-time' singers from higher (though not the highest) social classes; but they are not actually the first example of professional or semi-professional female singers. Nevertheless, Newcomb's hypothesis cancels out the opposite one outlined above; and neither theory in the end has enough information in terms of dates. We simply do not know whether women actors preceded women singers on stage, or vice-versa.

Where chronology is concerned, then, we are forced to fall back on, and remind ourselves of, the two well-documented events which formed my original points of departure and arrival. Whatever uncertainties remain, it is still true that in the period between 1525 and 1608 both the actress and the *prima donna* managed somehow to be accepted in Italian culture and society. So even in the absence of more precise dates, we are entitled to wonder whether we are talking about a single phenomenon rather than two separate ones. Did the first actresses and the first female opera singers – or at least some of them, on both sides – share the same social history? Might they even in many cases have been the same people? Here too the evidence is fragmentary, but it is suggestive enough to warrant further research.

The first leading lady of the Italian stage whose baptismal name (as opposed to stage name) we know was Vincenza Armani, who died (reputedly poisoned) in 1569. She received written tributes during her career from figures such as Leone de' Sommi (playwright and theatre practitioner) and Tommaso Garzoni (social chronicler);[17] and then a commemorative *Orazione* was published after her death by her colleague and probable lover Adriano Valerini. Before singing the praises of Vincenza's abilities in all forms of theatrical performance ("in Comedia, in Tragedia ed in Pastorale"), Valerini writes about her cultural background and training, in the traditional school disciplines of Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric . . . and also in Music. And in respect of that, he says:

> Nella Musica poi fece profitto tale che non pure cantava sicuramente la parte sua con i primi cantori d'Europa, ma componeva in questa professione miracolosamente, ponendo in canto quell'istessi Sonetti

17 Texts quoted in Taviani and Schino 1982, 116, 121.

> e Madrigali, le parole de cui ella anco faceva, di modo che veniva ad essere e Musico e Poeta; sonava de varie sorti di stromenti musicali, con tanta soavità che d'angelica mano pareva che fosser tocchi gli accordati legni . . . (qtd in Marotti and Romei 1991, 33)[18]
>
> [In Music she made such progress that not only could she reliably sing her part alongside the best singers in Europe, but was also herself a wonderful composer, setting to music those same Sonnets and Madrigals the words of which she wrote herself, so that she was Musician and Poet at the same time. She played various kinds of musical instruments, with such sweetness that it seemed as though the stringed wood was being touched by an angelic hand . . .]

Even after making allowances for the exaggerations which are proper to funeral speeches, these words seem to be interpretable in only one way. That is, that Vincenza Armani was not just an actress who could sing a little – something perfectly plausible in itself – but was a singer and musician whose competence reached professional levels. In fact the range of her talents, and especially her ability to compose verse and music and then to perform her own compositions, is entirely compatible with the hypothesis of a high-class courtesan who then becomes a stage performer. We cannot propose, of course, that she ever took on a role in musical drama, because prior to her death in 1569 such drama did not yet exist.

In the following generation of actresses, the famous Isabella Andreini would have rejected absolutely any suggestion of a link between her profession of actress and that of courtesan. For the whole of her career she cultivated, carefully and successfully, her image of a woman not only cultured and accomplished but also virtuous, devoted wife of her actor husband Francesco.[19] We know nothing of her early years before she married him, and therefore we do not know either whether this insistence of hers was based on the need to suppress and bury a slightly less respectable past.[20] What

18 *Orazione d'Adriano Valerini Veronese in morte della Divina Signora vincenza Armani, Comica Eccellentissima* (Verona 1570).

19 See also Andrews 2000, essay no. 9 in the present volume.

20 This rather cynical suspicion may seem gratuitous, but is not entirely without foundation: it has been echoed by Roberto Tessari in "O Diva, o 'Estable à tous chevaux'. L'ultimo viaggio di Isabella Andreini", in Alonge

is certain is that, like Vincenza Armani before her, she possessed a whole range of creative and artistic talents well beyond the ability to act. She may not have been a fully trained singer, but she was certainly an actress who could sing. A surviving account of her performance in the scenario entitled *The Madness of Isabella*, which was put on for the Granducal wedding in Florence in 1589, includes a mention of some songs "alla francese" (in French style – even actually in French?) of which she sang snatches during her great mad scene, around which the whole scenario was constructed (Pavoni 1589). Like Vincenza Armani she was also a poet, and her poetry was often written expressly in formats to be set to music. A recent doctoral thesis from the University of Chicago is devoted specifically to Isabella's musical experiences and abilities. The writer of the thesis is Anne E. MacNeil, working principally as a musicologist rather than as a theatre historian.[21] MacNeil proposes that the music for which Isabella Andreini wrote her poems still belonged solidly to an oral, rather than written, tradition (and here she picks up some well-known and established studies of Nino Pirrotta[22]) (1994).

When one speaks of a Renaissance tradition of oral music, one is speaking at least partly of a method of musical improvisation. A significant report survives in relation to the woman who is still regarded as Europe's first female composer – Francesca Caccini, daughter of Giulio Caccini who has already figured in this essay. In Suzanne G. Cusick's entry on her in the *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, we read a fascinating detail from surviving correspondence on what may have been Francesca's first serious composition for the stage: the music for a *torneo* called *La Stiava*, on a text by Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger. According to Cusick, Francesca "composed the parts by first singing to the poetry, then writing out what she had sung, giving the parts to her father

1989. It may also be significant that Isabella's son, Giovan Battista Andreini, kept returning throughout his life to polish, revise, and re-cast a dramatic poem he had composed on the life of the penitent Magdalen.

21 Professor MacNeil has of course since published his *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (2003).

22 Such as Pirrotta 1975, chap. 1; and his two essays "The Oral and Written Traditions of Music" (1984, 72-9) and "Commedia dell'Arte and Opera" (343-60).

to correct" (Cusick 1994b, 94-5). We hear that later in her career, at a private concert in Rome, she impressed the poet Giovanbattista Marino by improvising a sung version of some of the stanzas from his *Adone* without ever having read them before they were put into her hands (Crinò 1960-1601).[23] More questions may be raised than answered by such accounts; but they offer concrete evidence of a creative practice which in some way moved from oral performance to the page, rather than vice versa.

From her study of Isabella Andreini's songs, Anne E. MacNeil suggests that techniques of improvisation in music could well bear some relationship to techniques of improvisation in spoken theatre, in which Isabella as a *commedia dell'arte* actress was obviously expert. Therefore her musical training and her theatre training could have been closely linked. In both fields, the performer would make use of a simple framework: in theatre this would be the formulaic plot of the story to be acted; in music it would be an equally formulaic chord-pattern such as those traditionally called *romanesca* or *ruggiero*. Around this skeleton, in both cases, the actress or the musician would build a body of flesh which differed for each performance. The actress would draw on tropes taken from an accumulated repertoire of verbal and narrative units. In music, the units would be melodic and structural. In both cases the creative procedure would be constrained by existing styles and existing expectations.

A thesis like this is attractive to a theatre historian, because it fits in well with theories which have been developed for some time about the nature, technique, and mental processes of improvisation in *commedia dell'arte*.[24] It points to the need for some interdisciplinary research. Certainly we need to discover more – if we can – about the methods of literary improvisation practised by both *cortigiani* (courtiers) and *cortigiane* (courtesans);[25] and compare them with

23 The story comes from a letter by one Antimo Galli, who was present at the occasion, quoted by Crinò on p. 180 from the Florence State Archive, Mediceo 3645.

24 See Andrews 1991 and 1998, essays nos. 4 and 11 in this present volume. Also Fitzpatrick 1995; and Henke 2002.

25 The existence of verse improvisation as a social skill among male (respectable) courtiers is of course attested in the early chapters of Baldesar

what is known, or what may be deduced, about both musical and theatrical improvisation at that time.

For now, as a provisional conclusion, Anne MacNeil's thesis points us once more back to my original chronological points of departure and arrival. It helps us to suggest, cautiously, that when the actress Virginia Andreini Ramponi sang Monteverdi's *Lamento di Arianna*, she was not perhaps doing anything exceptional for her profession; and that perhaps in other cases too, the actress and the female singer of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods could often be one and the same person.

However, this essay began as a set of questions about how women performers became culturally acceptable, and how they struggled in addition to become respectable also in social terms. On that theme, a coda needs to be added from the life of Francesca Caccini. As the daughter of a musician and composer, Caccini seems to have hung on to her moral reputation as successfully as did Isabella Andreini in her parallel profession. Her first husband was a court singer like herself, and she seems frequently to have performed opposite him in dramatic or semi-dramatic spectacles. By him she had a daughter, Margherita. After he died, she managed in 1627 to re-marry herself to Tomaso Raffaelli, a nobleman (no less) of the city of Lucca who was also a patron of music, and with whom she had a son who would of course inherit his father's high social status. After being widowed for a second time, she went back on to the payroll of successive Grand Duchesses of Tuscany, composing and directing court entertainments, and singing in chamber ensembles in which her daughter also participated. She was still functioning in Florence in 1638 – a full thirty years after the story of Monteverdi's *Arianna* seems to establish for us the necessity, and therefore one would think the relative respectability, of the female singer in music drama. And yet, in her dictionary entry, Suzanne Cusick tells us the following:

> In January 1637 she refused to allow Margherita to sing on stage in a commedia at the grand duke's command, arguing that such an appearance could compromise the 15-year-old's chances of an honourable convent placement or marriage contract, would tarnish

Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano.*

> the social position of her son and break the terms of Raffaelli's will. (Cusick 1994b, 98)

Francesca herself, after a lifetime singing dramatic roles, had been an acceptable mother of a nobleman's son; but for her daughter there remained thresholds which it was still inadvisable to cross. Had matters become more complicated because her mother had risen to such high rank? Did this particular comic text contain dangerously scurrilous material? Were times simply changing? At all events, the social status of a woman performer remained balanced on a knife-edge, however much the most exalted of audiences had come to regard her as a cultural requirement. And we know of course that this remained true for many centuries, whether her role on stage was to speak, or to sing, or both.

Appendix

Chronology of Relevant Events

1508 The first classical-style original comedy, Ariosto's *La cassaria*, is performed at the Este court of Ferrara, inaugurating modern European theatre. Female roles are not highlighted much, and all performers are male.

1513 Performance of Bibbiena's *La Calandra* in Urbino: it offers much more scurrilous female behaviour on stage than Ariosto did, and all performers are still male.

1525 **Machiavelli's comedy *Clizia* performed in Florence**, with "Barbara Fiorentina" singing the madrigals between the acts. All roles in the comedy are played by men or boys, and the character of Clizia herself does not appear on stage at all.

1532 The comedy *Gl'ingannati*, performed in Siena by the Accademia degli Intronati, creates a model for comedy which gives more focus to the role of a constant virtuous young heroine. The part would still have been played by a boy.

1541 First performance of a classical-style original **tragedy** – Giovan Battista Giraldi's *Orbecche* – in Ferrara, under the patronage of the Duke Ercole II d'Este. There is a strong emotional role for a heroine, but all performers are male.

1548 **First known appearance of (probably) professional actresses**, in the (already existing?) Florentine company summoned to perform *La Calandra* in Lyons, before Henri II and his queen Caterina de' Medici.

1554 The **pastoral** play *Il Sacrificio*, by Agostino Beccari, is performed in Ferrara. Although pastoral dramas and sketches were not new, this one established a pattern for five-act 'regular' pastorals, with a musical element, and with well-developed female roles. Nothing is known about the cast: two musical items from the show have survived.

1565 In Florence, sung and danced interludes are performed at the Medici court for the comedy *La cofanaria*. Giulio Caccini, as a boy, performs the female role of Psyche.

1567 Sung and danced interludes at the Medici court for the comedy *I Fabii*. No evidence about who performed female roles.

1567 Actresses now firmly established in touring professional theatre companies: Mantua is visited in this year by two of them, each with its much admired leading lady.

1569 Death of Vincenza Armani, the first leading actress whose full name is known. In his celebratory *Orazione*, Adriano Valerini celebrates her musical skills as well as acting talents.

1576 Isabella Canali (b. 1562) marries Francesco Andreini, and begins her career in the Compagnia dei Gelosi as the first respectable female star of the European stage.

1581 In Ferrara, Duke Alfonso II d'Este founds the "Concerto di Dame", an innovatory chamber group of female courtiers selected primarily for their singing ability. In Florence, in the same decade, Giulio Caccini develops a rival female ensemble centred on his own wife and daughters. One daughter, Francesca, will become the first significant woman composer in Italy, as well as a versatile singer.

1589 The great "Florentine Interludes" mounted for the Medici Granducal wedding. Musical parts in the interludes sung by women, including Vittoria Archilei. Spoken dramatic performances included *La pazzia d'Isabella*, an improvised comic scenario by the Compagnia dei Gelosi, with Isabella Andreini doing her well-known mad scene: she inserts some French songs into it, to please the French princess who is the bride.

1598 *Dafne* by Corsi and Peri, usually regarded as the first opera. No information about female roles.

1600 The second known opera, *Euridice* by Peri and Caccini: Euridice is sung by Caccini's sister-in-law (and the family female singing ensemble may have been involved); but other female solo roles are taken by boys or castrati.

1601 Giovan Battista Andreini, actor son of Francesco and Isabella, marries the actress Virginia Ramponi.

1604 Death of Isabella Andreini in Lyons, of a miscarriage. In her published tribute, her son Giovan Battista celebrates

her singing skills as well as other talents.
Francesca Caccini is offered a post as court singer in France, but the Grand Duke of Florence insists on keeping her for himself.

1607 Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in Mantua. The cast seems to have been entirely male.
Francesca Caccini takes a formal post as court musician in Florence, including a dowry to enable her to marry the singer Giovan Battista Signorini. She composes her first music (now lost) for the stage, *La stiava*, a Florentine *torneo* on a text by Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger: her composition methods were based on a form of oral improvisation.

1608 **Monteverdi's *Arianna* in Mantua**, Virginia Andreini Ramponi singing the title role with the *Lamento*. All the music except Arianna's *Lamento* is now lost, though the full libretto (by Ottavio Rinuccini) survives. In the same year, Virginia sang in Monteverdi's *Ballo delle Ingrate*.

1614 The actor Pier Maria Cecchini publishes his *Discorsi intorno alle comedie*, remarking (inaccurately) that actresses have been functioning for less than fifty years.

1618 Evidence of actresses taking on "Arianna" as a spoken role in improvised theatre. Francesca Caccini publishes her *Primo libro delle musiche*, thus preserving at least some of her music for posterity.

1637 Francesca Caccini, now twice widowed, refuses to allow her 15-year-old daughter Margherita to sing on stage in a *commedia* for the Grand Duke of Florence; arguing that it would compromise the reputation both of the daughter herself and of Francesca's son.

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9

Isabella Andreini and Others: Women on Stage in the Late Cinquecento*

In any collection of essays on women in the Italian Renaissance, it would seem obligatory to offer some research on female theatre performers in Italy. They were after all the first of their kind in Europe, at least in any form of performed art which had cultural status attached to it. However, rather than offering true 'research', the present essay will do little more than lay the ground for further study. The appearance of actresses on the Italian Renaissance stage has not been explored as much as the importance of the subject would warrant. On this occasion it has proved a substantial enough task simply to assemble the rather scattered information which is available on the subject, and to asses where one ought to go from there.[1]

Up to now, by far the most important and penetrating treatment of women performers has appeared in the 'revisionist' study of *commedia dell'arte* composed by Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino (1982).[2] But the title of that volume (*Il segreto della commedia dell'arte*) does not immediately suggest a focus on actresses in particular; and in fact Taviani's discussion of them, perceptive and challenging as it is, contributes in the end to a wider thesis about

* The paper was originally composed and delivered at a conference in 1994: by the time of printing, its bibliography was already out of date. Some updating has therefore been inserted into these footnotes.

1 In 1994, new work was appearing on Isabella Andreini. In addition to the study by Francesca Romana De Angelis (1991), the pastoral play *Mirtilla* had been edited by Maria Luisa Doglio (1993). Anne E. MacNeil had written a Ph.D. dissertation in 1994. One chapter of this had been developed as a published article in 1995. It remains the case that when this paper was composed, early Italian actresses had been largely neglected, especially by Italian scholars, as a subject of study in their own right.

2 More recently we have benefited from Ferrone 2014.

stage improvising method, which applies just as much to male performers as to female ones. Much of what appears in this present essay is indebted to Taviani; but it may have the merit of focusing and isolating what it is currently possible to record on the question of the female stage performer. For example, even Taviani does not fully convey the enormous social and cultural innovation that was involved in accepting actresses into theatre – an innovation that was then followed, at intervals and with varying degrees of reluctance, in the rest of Europe.

The fact that it was an innovation is attested by the heated opposition generated by actresses in certain quarters of society, and particularly in the Counter-Reformation Church, as shown by documents appearing well into the seventeenth century. The famous diatribes of the Jesuit writer Gian Domenico Ottonelli are intolerant of the whole phenomenon of theatre (Ottonelli 1655);[3] but as regards women performers in particular they confirm attitudes that we would have expected anyway. In Renaissance society, any woman who exhibited herself in public was doing so to sexual effect even if she had no sexual intention. On the one hand, she was arousing lascivious desires in all male spectators (including Ottonelli himself, to judge by the tone of his comments);[4] and on the other, she was branding hersellf irredeemably as a potential or actual whore. We do not have to spend time demonstrating the existence of this prejudice. Why else would the English Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, so much more adventurous and flexible than Italian theatre in almost every other respect, stick rigidly to the

3 The first editions of the various volumes appeared between 1646 and 1652.

4 See for example the passages quoted in Taviani and Schino 1982, 163-73. E.g. "Et invero una femmina, comica di professione, perita dell'arte, practica della scena, formosa per natura   come non recherà grandissimo danno a molte anime deboli di virtú? come non darà gravissima sconfitta all'esercito delle cristiane perfezioni? come non accrescerà le vittorie lascive et i carnali trionfi della disonestà?" (169; And indeed a woman who is a professional actress, skilled in her art, accustomed to the stage, naturally attractive . . . how will she not inflict enormous damage on many souls of shaky virtue? how will she not grievously defeat the army of Christian perfections? how will she not increase the number of lascivious victories and carnal triumphs of unchastity?). It seems to be taken for granted that such attractions are utterly irresistible.

use of boy actors until its dissolution by Parliament in 1642? In Italy itself, throughout the early period of *commedia erudita*, female parts were played almost exclusively by male actors – youths or boys for the younger parts, perhaps a more 'pantomime dame' style for older matrons and servants.

Indeed, in Italy the prejudice was extended against the appearance on stage of certain classes of female character, especially in comedy. There is a large number of *commedie erudite*, from both early and late in the sixteenth century, that either keep the young heroine off the stage altogether, or seriously restrict the number of her appearances. This is a subject I have treated elsewhere;[5] but it is to my mind one of the major reasons why much of early Italian comedy has failed to survive into the modern theatre repertoire.

There are a few examples of noble ladies being allowed to act, in extremely closeted and private circumstances involving only their own family and friends.[6] And more research may be needed on all-female performances for all-female audiences, in convents and elsewhere – a phenomenon that would presumably circumvent the accusations even of an Ottonelli.[7] But Cesare Molinari reports that in 1542 some Sienese noblewomen were punished for acting even in a private show (1985, 73) – he does not give his source for the story, or any further details, but it exemplifies the social disapproval that actresses were likely to face.

The question that is difficult for us to answer, and that may be important, is how far down the social and cultural ladder these prejudices effectively operated. When we speak of 'theatre', especially in a Renaissance context, we are dealing most of all with the new cultural, social and scholarly status which the humanists

5 It is a recurrent theme in Andrews 1993. See also Andrews 1991, essay no. 6 in the present volume.

6 For example, in 1493 a private court performance in Ferrara of "la famosa storia fiorentina di Ippolito Buondelmonte e Leonora de' Bardi" (the famous Florentine tale of Ippolito Buondelmonte and Leonorda de' Bardi) by one Pachino had an extensive female cast, some even playing male parts: the whole resident court seems to have acted as audience. See Catalano 1930, vol. 1, 120-1, quoting a letter from the courtier Bagnacavallo to Isabella d'Este. I am grateful to Jennifer Lorch for calling my attention to this reference.

7 See now, for example, Weaver 2002.

wanted to bestow on performed drama, provided it was based on classical models. To the new respectable dramatists and performers, anything that was going on at 'street level', among mountebanks and itinerant entertainers, was probably so irrelevant as to require no comment at all, not even in condemnation. It might well be true, as modern fictional models continue to suggest,[8] that throughout the Middle Ages small family teams of performers involving not only men but also their wives or daughters, toured the streets of Europe with sketches and farces. So although actresses in documented theatre were indeed a tremendous innovation, they may nevertheless have taken some minimal example from models now entirely undocumented. Such models would be influential in the subsequent tendency to form almost respectable theatre families and dynasties, like the Andreini themselves whom we shall be treating below.

We still assume, anyway, that the earliest 'serious' actresses were Italians in *commedia dell'arte* troupes. As it happens, though, the earliest surviving contract document for a theatre company, the Mantuan one of 1545, does not mention any women. In that same year, a notarial document drawn up in Bourges in France contracts one Marie Ferré (or Fairet) to perform in the company of one Antoine de l'Esperonnière, and obliges her to share with Antoine's wife any gifts given to her by male admirers (Lacour 1921, 6-7).[9] The kind of material that was being performed is not clear; but Marie is described as "femme d'un bateleur", which puts her socially in the "mountebank" or "charlatan" class even before joining Antoine's troupe. Further evidence of French actresses does not occur until the 1580s and 1590s, by which time acting companies and the material they performed will have been influenced by Italian theatre, both scripted and improvised (Lacour 1921, 10-13). In Spain, actresses were definitely introduced by Italian *arte* companies, and their appearance gave rise to a flurry of legislation, as well as to

8 I am thinking of the couple of young actors Jof and Maria, in Ingmar Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal* (1956), set in medieval Sweden. The plausibility of this fiction has to be judged in relation to surviving evidence.

9 Also Taviani and Schino 1982, 467n22, where the spelling "Fairet" is used. The relevant document was first brought to light in Boyer 1888.

scandal and debate (McKendrick 1989, 49). It was decreed that only married women were allowed to act, preferably of course in the same company as their husbands; and that the only male guests they might receive in their dressing rooms were those husbands. As also later in Restoration England, such rules were rarely obeyed.

The first Italian actress listed in a surviving company notarial document is one Lucrezia Senese, in a Roman contract of 1564 (Taviani and Schino 1982, 183-4). However, this date is certainly too late to be of any significance. The earliest documented example, but probably not the first in fact, relates to 1548 – the staging of Bibbiena's *Calandra* by the Italian community in Lyons, in the presence of King Henri II and Queen Caterina de' Medici. Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, refers to "comédiens et comédientes": he had been told that the latter "estoient très-belles, parloient très-bien et de fort bonne grâce" (1867, vol. 3, 256-8; "were very pretty, and spoke very well and in a graceful manner").[10] These performers seem to have been sent for specially from Florence, which suggests that we could well be dealing with professionals. We should note that on this particular occasion the play was already published (in 1521) and well known, and therefore probably performed from the script rather than improvised in *arte* style. However, records do not show whether the women actually played dramatic roles, or recited only the ecomiastic and allegorical material which was composed for the performance.

Most of us would therefore feel confident enough to say that what we now call *commedia dell'arte* troupes introduced female performers from very early on, probably in the decade of the 1540s. But we do not know how they got away with it, in the face of such huge prejudices. We do not know whether pre-existing traditions of street theatre may have fed into the new practice; or whether, as Taviani suggests, we should look more to the model of the cultured courtesans who, among other accomplishments, made great profession in their informal salons of their skills in literary improvisation (1982, 331-44). It remains clear, however, that actresses did appear, and that they became rapidly standard in professional companies throughout most of Italy; though the

10 For the whole event, see Scève 1997.

Papal States, perhaps predictably, fought a long rearguard action and banned actresses from appearing in this territory.[11]

Even after actresses were introduced, not all female roles were played by female performers. As late as 1614 the Uniti company had an Ottavio Bernardini playing the part of Franceschina (Taviani and Schino 1982, 103). So even some serving maids, as well as elderly matrons, crones and bawds, could be seen as drag roles. We should remember that old Madame Pernelle in Molière's *Tartuffe* (1669) was played by a man. But in the roles of heroines, or *Innamorate*, the women performers seem to have become rapidly established once the taboo was broken. By the 1560s, actresses were a normal feature of travelling professional companies, and already had star status and a following of admirers. In 1567 the duchy of Mantua was visited by two competing theatre companies, both including women (Molinari 1985, 74):[12] one was actually directed by the actress known as "Barbara Flaminia", and the other run jointly by a "Pantalone" (possibly Giorgio Pasquati) and the much-praised Vincenza Armani (of whom more immediately below). The artistic and commercial rivalry between the groups was made more interesting for the public by the fact that each leading lady was being courted by a different aristocratic patron – it is reported that the whole city was divided between fans of "Flaminia" and supporters of Vincenza. As well as mounting improvised comic scenarios, each woman also starred in a more serious play, one based on the Virgilian story of Dido,[13] and the other taken from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*.[14]

Vincenza Armani seems to be the first female star of the stage whose name has come down to posterity,[15] granted that we cannot

11 As a result, the touring itineraries of *arte* companies before and after 1600 could not easily include the Papal States: for this reason, as well as topographical and organisational ones, the troupes had to choose between a northern or a southern circuit (Ferrone 1993, 4-5 and notes).

12 For this whole event see now Nicholson 1999, 246-69.

13 Three tragedies on Dido had been printed by 1567, the authors being Alessandro Pazzi de' Medici (1524), Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio (1541) and Lodovico Dolce (1546).

14 Though dramas, and especially operas, based on the *Furioso* eventually became common, no such theatrical text has survived from before 1567.

15 According to De Angelis 1991, 25, Adriano Valerini had a liaison with

put a baptismal name to her rival "Flaminia". Tributes to Armani have survived from the pen of Leone de' Sommi, dramatist and actor-manager, and from Tommaso Garzoni's *Piazza universale di tutti le professioni* of 1584, which is so often quoted as evidence for various forms of street theatre in the late sixteenth century. Vincenza died early, in 1569, reputedly poisoned. Her colleague and lover Adriano Valerini, who was to marry another actress and found a stage dynasty, published an oration on her death.[16] It is thus remarkable, among other things, how soon in theatre history actresses became the object of an admiring cult, and how soon (to put things cynically) their colleagues were preapared to capitalise on that cult in order to increase both the profile and the status of the profession.[17]

Vincenza's lifestyle, from the little we know, was sexually unconventional, and might tend to support rather than refute the link in the public mind between the categories of actress and whore. The terms in which she is praised in print are all the more interesting when set against that background. Leone de' Sommi wrote as follows:

> che se, a qualche parola o poco honesta
> o poco saggia, vergognosa gira
> i fulgenti occhi, e che a l'altrui richiesta,
> in vece d'altro dir, tace e sospira;
> quel volger d'occhi e quel chinar la testa
> ancide pur chi in tale atto la mira,
> sí dolce esprime, co'l silentio grato,
> l'honesto sdegno c'ha nel cor celato.
> (Qtd in Taviani and Schino 1982, 116)

> [for if, at some word lacking in modesty / or wisdom, she bashfully turns aside / her flashing eyes, and instead of saying more / in response to another, she falls silent and sighs; / that turning of eyes

an actress named Lidia da Bagnacavallo even before his association with Armani.

16 The full text is reproduced by Marotti and Romei (Valerini 1991, 27-41).

17 Musical and poetic honours were also paid to female singers, such as Laura Peverara. As well as MacNeil 1994, see Newcomb 1986. The subject of tributes to actresses has since been developed much further by Laiena 2023.

> and bending of head / simply slays anyone who sees her do it, / so gently does it express, in welcome silence, / the virtuous scorn which she hides within her heart.]

An ability in Armani to use "virtuous scorn" to suppress the more ribald tendencies in her audience or listeners, suggests that she was able to project on stage an image rather different from that attached to her private life. And Tommaso Garzoni's tribute, though it acknowledges Armani's skills in self-publicity in a tone of voice that may be ambivalent, concentrates on verbal facility and eloquence as the central and most admirable quality of her stage performance:

> Della dotta Vincenza non parlo, che, imitando la facondia ciceroniana, ha posto l'arte comica in concorrenza con l'oratoria e, in parte con la beltà mirabile, parte con la grazia indicibile, ha eretto un amplissimo trionfo di se stessa al mondo spettatore, facendosi divulgare per la piú eccellente comediante di nostra etade. (Qtd in Taviani and Schino 1982, 121)

> [I cannot speak enough of the learned Vincenza who, imitating the eloquent fluency of Cicero, has set the art of the actor in competition with oratory, and partly with her startling beauty, partly with her indescribable grace, has built a vast apotheosis of herself with the world as her audience, broadcasting herself as the most excellent actress of our age.]

Ferdinando Taviani places great stress on this "facondia ciceroniana", and on links between acting and formal oratory. He uses Garzoni's emphasis as a key piece of evidence in arguing that the improvising actors, and even more the improvising actresses, of *commedia dell'arte* troupes drew their skills more from a tradition of literary improvisation in courts and salons[18] than from the practices of mountebanks, charlatans and other street theatre. Vincenza, he

18 There is of course a reference to such practices in the early chapters of Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*. MacNeil persuasively suggests the necessity of investigating the links and similarities between Renaissance musical improvisation and the techniques of *commedia dell'arte* (1994). Isabella also turns out to have had a reputation as a singer; and some of her *Rime* were intended for, and received, musical setting. See also Andrews 1999, essay no. 8 in the present volume.

would claim, was simply re-deploying into a theatrical context the established virtuosity of a high-class courtesan: she might even, by that argument, have been such a courtesan before she became an actress. There are a number of scholars, from Italy and elsewhere, who would have their assumptions and prejudices upset by this thesis. It undermines a view, treasured by many modern theatre historians and practitioners, of *commedia dell'arte* as essentially 'actors' theatre', based on the hard physical presentational skills of the street entertainer, and hostile to the dominance of text or dramatist.[19] I have myself, in other writings, developed a theory of improvisation technique based partly on the assumption that its earliest practitioners were illiterate (1993, 175-85).[20] Nevertheless, Taviani needs to be taken seriously, as a corrective if nothing more. There are many other reasons, on close inspection, why we should acknowledge links between the repertoire of improvisation and a stock of verbal commonplaces established first of all in written literature. The Lovers, the *Innamorati*, in the standard *arte* plot were more indebted than most of the other masks to literary *topoi*, in building their repertoire - and all the female stars of the genre, in this earliest period, belonged in the ranks of the *Innamorate*.[21]

It is considerations like these that lead us most naturally to the figure of Isabella Andreini, whose name is included automatically to represent the earliest actresses in most histories of Italian Renaissance theatre. Her prominence in the records may be chiefly due to the large number of surviving written tributes to her, not only from her husband, son, and other colleagues but also from celebrated literary figures such as Tasso and Marino.[22] We have now seen that similar write-ups were devoted to other actresses and singers, both during and after their lives. Isabella may have received more of them in quantity than others did. More significant

19 For example, John Rudlin sees the commercial presentation techniques of mountebanks as being the root of *arte* improvisation (1994).

20 See also Andrews 1991, essay no. 4 in the present volume.

21 This theme has now been substantially developed by Henke 2002.

22 Many of these appear as prefaces in seventeenth-century editions of her *Rime*, *Lettere* and *Fragmenti*. But her son Giovan Battista Andreini edited a separate volume (*Pianto d'Apollo: rime funebri in morte di Isabella Andreini*) in 1606. Tributes to Isabella have also survived from French sources.

is the fact that she herself wrote and published, with the explicit intention of participating in the world of written culture as well as in the world of the theatre.

Born in 1562, just seven years before the death of Vincenza Armani, Isabella Canali (her maiden name) belongs to a second generation of actresses. There is no suggestion in surviving records that she ever had a background as a courtesan. Most information comes from a biography put together in the eighteenth century by Francesco Saverio Bartoli (1782).[23] That account, whether based on fact or legend, has her born in Padua into a relatively poor family but nevertheless given a good education, to which she is said to have responded with an immediate enthusiasm for literary culture. Then we are told that she married Francesco Andreini at the age of sixteen, and that she became a successful leading actress in the Gelosi company. The marriage is recorded before the appearance on stage, as if she became an actress simply because she married an actor – how much significance can be given to this order of narration, in an account written 200 years later, is difficult to judge.[24] Nevertheless, we can state with confidence that when Isabella Andreini was celebrated by her peers it was in the guise of a respectable married woman. Her social and sexual virtues were combined with artistic talents that in other women would be seen as rather risky, but whose dangers she managed to transcend. Her acceptance into polite and even noble society is a matter of fact, not of legend: we know that she was, most unusually for a woman, elected to membership of an academy.[25] She died in 1604 of a miscarriage in Lyons, on the way home from a triumphant tour in Paris: Bartoli's description of extraordinary honours offered at

23 Sections of his biography of Isabella are quoted in Taviani and Schino 1982, 124-26.

24 She seems to have married Andreini in 1578, very soon after his return from Turkish captivity. No account survives of the circumstances in which they met, such as might tell us what she was doing at the age of sixteen. The attempts of De Angelis (1991) to fill in the emotional details of their relationship must regretfully be classed as novellettish speculation.

25 She was accepted into the Accademia degli Intenti of Pavia, with the pseudonym "Accesa". For the rarity of such an event, see Fahy 2000, 438-52 – the same collection in which this present essay also appeared.

her funeral by the civic community of Lyons is not likely to have been invented out of nothing - and indeed copies still survive of a commemorative medal struck in her honour:

> Ebbe nel suo male, che fu breve, l'assistenza di Cavalieri e Dame lionesi non solo, ma anche di molti Nobili italiani che trovavansi in quella città . . . Qual visse da buona cristiana tal finalmente morí d'anni 42 nel 1604 e fu accompagnato il suo feretro dalla Comunità di Lione con insegne, e mazzieri, e con doppieri da' signori mercanti preceduto. (Qtd in Taviani and Schino 1982, 125)
>
> [During her illness, which was brief, she had the support not only of knights and ladies of Lyons, but also of many Italian nobles who happened to be in the city . . . Just as she had lived as a good Christian, so she died in the end at the age of 42 in 1604, and her bier was accompanied by the commune of Lyons with banners and mace-bearers, and preceded with candles by the leading merchants.]

Isabella is the first famous example, though probably not the first example, of a woman who helped to establish a conventional family structure within the bounds of a theatrical profession which was still seen by many as a threat to family values. Her son Giovan Battista Andreini was a leading actor, manager and dramatist of his own generation in the seventeenth century.[26] Theatrical families of this type eventually became quite normal: sticking to the most familiar areas of history, one thinks of Molière and his colleagues in seventeenth-century France, and of husband-and-wife teams of actors in Goldoni's Venice. The 'arte' of *commedia dell'arte* was explicitly a trade guild, and it was no less normal in this craft than in others for successive generations of a family to continue in the same business. Despite Ottonelli's prejudices, many of these married actresses may have led unglamorous and virtuous lives. The extra dimension in Isabella Andreini's career (and the fact that she attracted attention, and therefore admiration) was the links that she built with the literary world by writing and publishing her own

26 Giovan Battista's first wife Virginia was a singer as well as actress – she was entrusted with the role of Monteverdi's Arianna in 1623. Further studies of Giovan Battista can now be found in Ferrone 1993, chap. 6; and in Rebaudengo 1994.

compositions. As far as we know, she was the only female actor, though by no means the only actor, to do this.[27]

It is important from the start to distinguish between the *Mirtilla* and the *Rime*, published by Isabella in her lifetime, and the *Lettere* and *Fragmenti* (or *Ragionamenti*) which appeared after her death, and which were undoubtedly edited by her husband Francesco Andreini in ways and to a degree which we cannot yet fully determine. Her first venture into print was the pastoral play in five acts, *Mirtilla*, first printed in 1588 when she was 26 years old. The play is dedicated by the woman author to a woman patron - Lavinia della Rovere, marchesa del Vasto. The dedicatory letter is relatively brief, very conventional, and contains no reference at all to the gender of either person concerned. The compliments paid could equally well appear from a male author to a male dedicatee. But the letter introduces a theme recurrent in Isabella's other dedicatory and introductory material, whereby the sheer status of poetic activity inspires laudable ambition, and is enough reason in itself to inspire anyone to write and to publish: "è l'ingegno humano cosa troppo divina, e coloro, che nell'otio intepiditi lasciano cosí raro dono perire, non meritano trà gli huomini essere annoverati" (human talent is too divine a property to be neglected; and those who are idle, and allow it to go to waste, do not deserve to be classed as human).[28]

I would judge *Mirtilla* to be a very standard pastoral play for its time. The usual nymphs and shepherds pursue each other, and despair over each other, in a complex and partly circular permutation. Igilio loves Fillide; Fillide loves Uranio; Uranio loves Ardelia; and Ardelia falls in love with her own image, like Narcissus. Mirtilla also loves Uranio; the independent huntsman Tirsi is eventually converted to loving Mirtilla. Coridone has a stable marital relationship with Nisa, whom we never see.

27 For the way in which the social aspirations of actors were associated with the production of printed literary texts, see the Introduction in Ferrone 1985; and Ferruccio Marotti's edition of Flaminio Scala's scenarios (1976).

28 Isabella's main point is complicated by the inevitable sexist imposition in the Italian language whereby the word "uomo" represents a human being in general as well as a person of the male sex. For the letter, see Andreini 1993, 33-4.

Eventually there are enough changes of heart to pair everyone off, but the changes come about mostly through talk and discussion rather than through any enacted dramatic event. The play thus contains much more debate and rhetoric than action, except for one sequence in Act 3 which could be seen as 'sub-plot'. Here a Satyr pursues Fillide but is tricked and immobilised by her (also a traditional *topos*, with feminine ingenuity able to defeat bestial lust). The Satyr is rescued from his trap by the cheerful goatherd Gorgo, and the two of them retire to devote themselves to Bacchus rather than Cupid – a typically 'plebeian' choice, which has already been justified by Gorgo in a comic monologue.

In the five acts of *Mirtilla* there is nothing, in terms of structure, events or stereotypes, that does not conform to the pattern set for pastoral drama in 1554 by Beccari's *Il sacrificio*. In a search for more personal input, or for passages involving a specifically female point of view, just two episodes might tentatively be singled out. In 4.2, the huntsman Tirsi is finally persuaded of the joys of love by a long eloquent speech from Coridone in praise of a trusting stable relationship, with a few modest hints that marriage (though the word "matrimonio" is never explicitly used) can provide sexual pleasures as well as other rewards. Is Isabella alluding here to her own successful marriage to Francesco? Or is that what she wants her readers (and perhaps also Francesco) to believe, in line with the determinedly virtuous image that she aimed to project? The second passage which one might highlight comes in 5.5, where there is a rather rapid change of heart by the nymph Ardelia, who decides to abandon her narcissistic yearning for her own image and surrender to Uranio instead. Uranio is naturally delighted, but praises her for what he sees as a particularly feminine ability to make rapid and unexpected decisions:

> ché il bel femineo sesso,
> tra molti e molti doni
> che 'l Cielo e la Natura
> gli concesse, possiede anco il consiglio
> tanto piú saggio, quanto men pensato.
> (Andreini 1993, 146)

> [for the fair female sex, / among all the other gifts / that Heaven and Nature gave it, / possesses also a power of decision / which is all the wiser for not being meditated in advance.]

Is this a somewhat clumsy attempt to turn the patriarchal cliché about the volubility and inconsistency of women into a positive quality, rather than a defect?

A rapid gallop through Isabella's *Rime*, published in 1601, shows a dutiful display of sonnets, madrigals, *canzonette* and other Petrarchan genres (Vescovo 1991, 84-94).[29] There are 362 items, plus nine *Egloghe Boschereccie* at the end – these last being seven dramatic monologues and two dialogues, all of which could act as repertoire material for Isabella to use in further pastoral dramas. There is certainly here a determination to address, and thus engage in literary dialogue with, a huge range of noble patrons and conspicuous cultural figures. Nearly sixty people are either addressed or celebrated in over eighty of these compositions, ranging from the king and queen of France, through various Italian dukes and duchesses, to writers such as Torquato Tasso. Once again, one senses a view of artistic activity as a source of fame and recognition, together with an acceptance of existing literary models and formats. The one poem that stands out is the introductory sonnet:

> S'alcun fia mai, che i versi miei negletti
> legga, non creda a questi finti ardori;
> ché, ne le scene imaginati amori
> usa a trattar con non leali affetti,
> con bugiardi non men con finti detti,
> de le Muse spiegai gli alti furori,
> talhor piangendo i falsi miei dolori,
> talhor cantando i falsi miei diletti.
> E come ne' Teatri, hor Donna ed hora
> Huom, fei rappresentando in vario stile
> quanto volle insegnar Natura ed Arte,
> cosí, la stella mia seguendo ancora,
> di fuggitivi età nel verde Aprile

29 MacNeil's bibliography reveals for what seems to be the first time that a *Parte seconda* of the *Rime* appeared in 1605 (1994).

> vergai con vario stil ben mille carte.
> (Qtd in Vescovo 1991, 58)

> [If anyone ever reads my neglected verses, / let them not believe in these feigned passions; / for, accustomed to treat on the stage of / imagined loves with untrue emotions, / with lying no less than feigned words, / I presented the exalted furies of the Muses, / sometimes weeping over my false sufferings, / sometimes singing of my false delights. / And, just as in the Theatres, now as a woman / and now as a man, performing in varied style, / I created whatever Nature and Art taught me, / so, still following my star, / writing of fleeting youth in green April, / I filled in varied style a thousand sheets of paper.]

Here Isabella insists that the passions that she reproduces in the poems are a set of dramatic fictions, like the similar speeches she also delivers on stage – there is little difference in her mind between lyric and dramatic writing. She has written poems for men to address to women, as well as vice versa, just as she has played men's parts as well as women's parts on stage. This piece of information is confirmed by the various roles assigned to her in Flaminio Scala's collection of scenarios printed in 1611.

Isabella's posthumously published works are at least as important as the *Mirtilla* and the *Rime*, but their ambiguous authorial and editorial status, and their complex printing history, demand more work and thought than has been put into them so far. The stage dialogues for lovers, which have the title either of *Fragmenti* or *Ragionamenti*, have been used quite properly by theatre historians as evidence for *commedia dell'arte* repertoire.[30] On this level their status is unproblematic, though they could still bear some close analysis. The extent to which they are the work of Isabella, and the extent to which they may have been edited or rewritten by Francesco, is irrelevant when they are seen as part of a common stock of material that the acting profession as a whole might adapt and use. But if we want to study Isabella Andreini, or women writers, rather than the history of improvised theatre, then the part played in these collections by Francesco (and indeed

30 Some, for example, are reproduced in Pandolfi 1957, vol. 2, 48-79.

perhaps by Flaminio Scala, whose name also appears as editor and dedicator) clearly becomes an issue.[31]

The dedicatory letter to the *Lettere* – this time addressed to the duke of Savoy – is of some interest: an extract from it appears as Appendix to this essay. In it Isabella reiterates at greater length what she said in the dedication to *Mirtilla*, about the importance of talent and the fame that it can produce: "fra tutte le cose atte a render l'huomo immortale, attissimo era il sapere" (of all the things able to render man immortal, the most capable of all is knowledge). Compared with the *Mirtilla* dedication, there is a greater insistence on the concept of immortality, as produced by fame, and one wonders about the statement: "Intention mia dunque fu di schermirmi quanto piú io poteva dalla morte" (My intention was in fact to shield myself as far as possible from death). Was this really Isabella's own train of thought – as it might well have been – or was it the melancholy reflection of a devoted widower, encapsulating his reasons for wanting to publish the volume? The dedication also makes specific comparisons, for the first time, between Isabella's career and lifestyle and those of other contemporary women. The thing that distinguishes her from those who attend "all'ago, alla conocchia et all'arcolaio" (to the needle, the spindle and the wool-winder) is "questo desiderio di sapere nato in me piú ardente" (this desire for knowledge most ardent in me from birth). The reference in parentheses, at that same point in the text, to "quelle che a piú alti e a piú gloriosi pensieri hanno la mente rivolta" (those who have their minds turned to higher and more glorious thoughts) is also noteworthy: it seems to exclude from such comparisons women who have taken the veil and dedicated themselves to the religious life. Prudently, Isabella does not want to enter into the question of whether their choice is better than hers.

The *Lettere* themselves bear more study (cf. no. 10 in this volume) because, like the *Rime*, they are basically fictional exercises, often written in a male rather than a female persona. They contain the insistence on virtue and propriety that pervades most of Isabella's work, and that seems to have been a necessary defensive

31 For more on these publications, see Andrews 2013, no. 10 in the present volume.

component in her whole career image, a constant rejection of the 'actress-whore' identification which would have banned her from the place in the sun that she so obviously sought. Offered as pieces of rhetoric to be enjoyed on the page, they must surely be seen also as models for imitation, however much this may be denied in the dedicatory letter. What one must surely propose – though the idea is rejected by Vescovo (1991, 87) – is that rhetoric on the page can also function as rhetoric on the stage, and that there must have been a close practical connection for Isabella herself between these literary exercises and the building of her personal repertoire as an "Innamorata". The following is no. 51 in order (the pieces are not numbered in the printing) in its entirety:

> Scherzi amorosi honesti Se la pietà può trovar luogo in voi, e se il cuor vostro non è d'una indurata selce, deh mirate con occhio compassionevole (nobilissima Donna) l'infelice mio stato; e non mi negate quella mercede ch'alla mia fedel servitú si conviene. La mia fermezza ch'a tutte l'altre va innanzi, non può comportare ch'io viva cosí miseramente, senz'alcun segno di guiderdone. Vi soffre il cuore (o mia Dea) di vedermi cosí languire, sotto la guardia di noiosi pensieri infaticabili nel tormentarmi? Se voi trovate piacer ne' miei dolori, ditelo almeno liberamente; ché quando io saprò questo, m'ingegnerò di sopportarli con pazienza, né vi sarò importuno col raccontargli: perché se 'l mio male ha da servir per istrumento de' vostri contenti, io haverò per miglior fortuna il compiacervi essendo continuamente tormentato, ch'el noiarvi essendo eternamente felice. (Transcribed from Andreini 1627, 95-6)

In translation, it can be of interest to divide this into two separate paragraphs:

> Virtuous games of love (A) If pity can find a place within you, and if your heart is not made of hardened flint, then look with a piteous eye, noble Lady, on my unhappy state; and do not deny me that mercy due to my faithful service. My constancy, which surpasses all others, cannot suffer me to live so miserably, without any sign of recompense.
>
> (B) Can your heart endure, o my goddess, to see me languish thus, in the custody of painful thoughts which never weary of

> tormenting me? If you find pleasure in my sufferings, then at least say so openly; for if I know this, I shall endeavour to bear them with patience, and shall not importune you by narrating them: because if my pain is to serve as an instrument of your pleasure, then I shall take more delight in satsifying you by being constantly tormented than I would in displeasing you by being eternally happy.

The fragment shows how the epistolary character of some of these pieces is not very strong. But in addition, my separation into paragraphs (A) and (B), obviously not appearing in the original, shows how such pieces can break down into separate commonplace units or conceits, each of which could be deployed independently in performed dialogues of love. There is nothing to prevent us from suggesting that such material came straight from Isabella's personal *libro generico*, where she collected her rhetorical acting repertoire. (This is not to deny that the words might be her own invention: actors composed their personal *zibaldoni*, as well as compiling them from other sources).

The links between collections of letters and the acting profession, in sixteenth-century Italy, perhaps need to be studied further.[32] It is known that the comic letters of Andrea Calmo, in Venetian dialect, were a reservoir of material for actors playing the part of Pantalone. But it has not yet been observed, perhaps, that collections of love letters were also published by Girolamo Parabosco, who had a strong tendency in his comedies to build scenes, including amorous dialogues, on the basis of repeated dramatic and rhetorical formulae (Andrews 1993, 163-8). There may be even more examples of how epistolary composition fed into drama.

Isabella Andreini is still of substantial interest, then, and there remains profitable work to be done on her writings. However, in the context of the present volume, we should conclude by returning to the whole larger issue of women performers on stage. Here too, it can be suggested, there are major questions that have still not been asked, let alone answered. In 1992 there appeared an excellent book

32 For a start, see the introduction to Ferrone 1993, vol 1, 18-22, where it appears that theatre practitioners of the Seicento who published collections of letters included Vincenzo Belando, Giovanni Gabrielli, Pier Maria Cecchini and Margherita Costa.

on English Restoration actresses by Elizabeth Howe. One of Howe's achievements was to look hard at the actual dramatic texts that were produced for the London theatre after 1660, and assess the ways in which the presence of female performers, and even the presence of named individual performers, affected dramaturgical practice. This is easy to do in relation to Restoration theatre, where there is so much more surviving evidence about when and where plays were staged and who acted in them. By comparison, Italian theatre from the 1540s onwards is going to offer sparse documentation. Nevertheless, it is surely essential that scholars and critics should try, where possible, to find criteria for stating whether a role in a play was intended for a female rather than a male performer, and to think more generally about the way in which the presence of actresses might have changed the assumptions, aims and practices of the writers of comedy, tragedy and pastoral drama. Actresses may have first appeared in *commedia dell'arte* companies that used the special techniques of improvisation; but those companies also, repeatedly, performed scripted drama whenever they were asked to do so. (Tasso's *Aminta*, reputedly destined for a first performance by the Gelosi company in 1573, is a celebrated case in point.) I have elsewhere taken the risk of suggesting that the character of Stella, in Giancarli's multilingual Venetian comedy *La zingana* (1545), might have been written for a female performer (Andrews 1993, 153-4).[33] Whether I am right or wrong in that particular instance, all those who work with Italian Renaissance theatre texts need to become more accustomed to seeking, identifying, and commenting on, the presence and the contribution of actresses – but also, naturally, on their possible exploitation by male dramatists for the benefit of male spectators. Such enquiries must rest equally on theoretical analysis and on archival research.

33 A show also called *La zingana*, either scripted or improvised, was performed by the Gelosi in 1589 at the famous Florentine grandical wedding, with Vittoria Piissimi in the star title role. Connections between this play and Giancarli's cannot firmly be established.

Appendix
Dedicatory Letter to Isabella Andreini's *Lettere*
(printed posthumously, 1607)

[*extract*]

[*The* ***bold italicised*** *words, which create ambiguities of gender, are transcribed as they appear in the editions of 1627 and 1634—though the implicit emphasis is entirely my own.*]

Al Serenissimo Don Carlo Emanuele, Duca di Savoia etc., Isabella Andreini

. . . essendo io stata dalla bontà del Sommo Fattore mandata ad esser Cittadina del Mondo, & essendo per avventura questo desiderio di sapere nato in me piú ardente, che in molt'altre donne dell'età nostra, le quali come che scuoprano in virtú de gli studi molte, e molte esser divenute celebri & immortali, nondimeno vogliono solamente attendere (e ciò sia detto con pace di quelle, che a piú alti & a piú gloriosi pensieri hanno la mente rivolta) all'ago, alla conocchia, & all'arcolaio, essendo dico in me nato ardentissimo il desiderio di sapere, ho voluto a tutta mia possanza alimentarlo; e benché nel mio nascimento la Fortuna mi sia stata avara di quelle commodità che si convenivano per ciò fare, e benché sempre sii stata lontanissima da ogni quiete, onde non ho potuto dir con Scipione, che mai non mi son veduta men'otiosa, che quando era otiosa, tuttavia per non far torto a quel talento, che Iddio, e la Natura mi diedero, e perché il viver mio non si potesse chiamar un continuo dormire, sapend'io, che ogni buon Cittadino è tenuto, per quanto può, a beneficar la sua Patria, a pena sapea leggere (per dir cosí) che io al meglio che seppi, mi diedi a comporre la mia Mirtilla favola boschereccia, che se n'uscí per le porte della stampa, e si fece vedere nel Teatro del Mondo molto male in assetto, per colpa di proprio sapere (io non lo nego) ma per mancamento ancora d'altrui cortesia (e non v'ha dubbio). doppo sudai nella fatica delle mie Rime, e di ciò non contenta procurai di rubar al Tempo, & alla necessità del mio faticoso essercitio alcun breve spatio d'hora, per dar opera a queste Lettere, che di mandar alla luce presso gli altri miei scritti ardisco, piú, perché mi confido nella benignità del

Mondo, che perché io credo, ch'esse vagliano: e se ***alcuna*** dicesse, che fu sempre intentione di chi mandò lettere alle stampe d'insegnar il vero modo di scriverle, sappia ***quel tale*** ch'io non hebbi mai cosí temerario pensiero, sapendo, ch'è solamente dato a gli ***huomini*** piú intendenti l'havere, e 'l conseguir simil fine. Intention mia dunque fu di schermirmi quanto piú io poteva dalla morte; ammaestrata cosí dalla Natura: perciò non doverà parer estrano ad alcuno, s'io ho mandato, e se tuttavia mando, nelle mani de gli huomini gli scritti miei, poiché ***ogn'uno*** desidera naturalmente d'haver in se ***stessa***, e 'n suoi parti, se non perpetua almeno lunghissima vita, e per conseguirla piú facilmente, ho eletto di dedicar questa forse non ultima fatica a V.A. Serenissima . . .

Di V.A.Sereniss.

Humiliss.e devotiss. Serva

Isabella Andreini

***

To the Most Serene Don Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy etc., Isabella Andreini

. . . so, since I was sent by the goodness of the Highest Creator to be a Citizen of the World, and since by chance that desire for knowledge was more ardent in me from birth than in many other women of our times, who although they discover through their studies that very many women have become famous and immortal, nevertheless they only want to attend to the needle, the spindle and the wool-winder (and let this be said without offence to those who have their minds turned to higher and more glorious thoughts); since, as I say, the desire for knowledge was most ardent in me from birth, I have wanted to nourish it with all my powers. And although at my birth Fortune was miserly in granting me those facilities which are needed in order to do this – although I have always lived removed from all repose, so that I have not been able to say, in Scipio's words, that I have never found myself so little at leisure as when I was at leisure – nevertheless in order not to wrong that talent which God and Nature gave me, and so that my

life could not be called one continual sleep, knowing that every good Citizen is obliged, as far as he can, to benfit his country, I had barely learned to read (so to speak) before, as best I could, I set myself to compose my pastoral drama *Mirtilla*, which was released through print, and went on view in the Theatre of the World – with little success, indeed, through ignorance in me (as I do not deny) but also through lack of courtesy in others (as cannot be doubted). Next I sweated over the labour of my Poems, and not content with this I managed to steal some brief hours from Time and from the demands of my wearying profession to work on these Letters, which I dare to display alongside my other writings, more because I trust in the World's generosity than because I think they are worth a great deal. And if ***anyone (f.)*** were to say that people who have sent letters to be printed have always intended to teach how to write them properly, let ***that person (m.)*** know that I have never had such a rash thought, knowing that it is only given to wiser ***men*** to pursue and achieve such a goal. My intention was in fact to shield myself as far as possible from death, being instructed in this by Nature. Therefore it ought not to seem strange to anyone if I have sent out, and continue to send out, my writings into men's hands, since ***everyone (m.)*** naturally desires to have for ***herself*** and her talents, if not perpetual life, then at least very long life; and to achieve that more easily I have chosen to dedicate this, perhaps not my last, labour to Your Most Serene Highness . . .

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10

Isabella Andreini's Stage Repertoire: the *Lettere e Fragmenti*

The publications of Isabella Andreini are beginning to receive scholarly attention. Her pastoral play *Mirtilla* of 1588 has now appeared in a modern edition and been translated into English (Doglio 1995; Campbell 2002). Her *Rime* were first published in 1601, and then supplemented with a *Parte seconda* issued two years later.[1] (A copy of the 1601 edition in the John Rylands Library in Manchester may be the only one available in the British Isles). The present essay, however, is an investigation into the actress's compositions in prose, the *Lettere* and *Fragmenti* (or *Ragionamenti*). Its conclusions will overlap in many areas with those of studies which have appeared in Italian, though its emphases will often be different: we aim most of all to update anglophone scholars, in both theatre studies and gender studies, who are taking an increasing interest in Isabella.[2]

Before discussing the content of this volume (or volumes – the reason for hesitating between the singular and the plural will emerge below), there is a need first of all to provide a full account of its (or their) content and publishing history. Such an elementary description is currently hard to find in critical literature on Isabella. Single extracts from both *Lettere* and *Fragmenti* have at times been quoted, but without a systematic account of what is contained in the volumes as a whole. A brief summary is offered by Piermario

1 There were five subsequent editions of the main volume of the *Rime*, the last appearing in 1696. A joint printing of *Mirtilla* and the *Rime*, in 1605, is discussed by Daria Perocco in her 2007 article cited in my next footnote. The full printing history of the *Parte seconda* has perhaps still to be established.

2 The main relevant studies in Italian are as follows: Taviani 1984, 3-76; Tessari 1988, 20-32; Vazzoler 2004, 107-32; Perocco 2004, 21-40, and 2007, 87-111. I thank Franco Vazzoler himself for making me aware of some of these items.

Vescovo, in an anthological volume which dedicates just ten pages to Isabella Andreini (1991, 84-94): but some of Vescovo's facts are inaccurate (even down to misprinting the publication date of *Mirtilla*), and he offers judgements about both the *Lettere* and the *Fragmenti* with which this present essay will disagree. Ferruccio Marotti and Giovanna Romei (1991, 163-208), reproducing a selection of extracts, are clearly well informed about the available editions (and can therefore make judgements about which ones to use); but they do not provide their readers with a full printing history, and neither do Franco Vazzoler in 2004, nor Daria Perocco in 2004 and 2007. A substantial and accurate account of that history appears in the *Répertoire* of Jeanine Basso dedicated to the *genre épistolaire en langue italienne* (1990, vol.2, 414-20): this source seems to have escaped Italian scholars, but has to be seen as a basis for any more detailed researches. At all events, we should explain what the *Lettere e Fragmenti* are, in bibliographical terms.

There is evidence from November 1601 that Isabella Andreini was working on some material in epistolary form, which her correspondent the Belgian humanist Erycius Puteanus (1574-1646) then urged her to publish. Whether this was the same material which now appears in her printed *Lettere* we cannot tell.[3] Isabella then died in Lyon in 1604. Her widower Francesco, "Capitano Spavento" on stage, later assembled or edited the texts which we now know as her *Lettere* and published them in 1607.[4] They are

3 In a letter of 19 November 1601 to the Flemish humanist Erycius Puteanus, Isabella says she is "per hora data alla fatica delle mie Lettere". The letter is reproduced by Perocco in 2007, 88 and 103-4; and, with an English translation, by MacNeil 2003, 307-8. Both scholars seem to assume that this is a reference to the material which was printed as *Lettere* in 1607. However, Andreini and Puteanus were at this time exchanging elaborately rhetorical formal epistles, often in Latin, of a very different kind. It is possible, then, that the "letters" referred to by Isabella on 19 November (and the "epistolares lucubrationes" mentioned by Puteanus on 14 December) were a separate project from what we are discussing in the present essay. Puteanus himself seems unlikely to have been interested in the fragmentary Italian compositions which became the published *Lettere*. (For a brief biography of Puteanus, see Perocco 2007, 98-9).

4 Professor Anne E. MacNeil has confirmed to me personally that her references in *Music and Women* to a 1602 edition were an error of transcription.

prefaced with a dedicatory letter to Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy, signed by Isabella but with the date 14 March 1607, three years after her death. This fact has been interpreted in theoretical ways;[5] but we can add the more mundane speculation that Isabella may indeed have composed this dedication (or a version of it, perhaps even addressed to someone else), but that Francesco then ascribed to it the date when the collection was first issued.

In 1616, Isabella's *Lettere* were reprinted with more material attached to them. The title page of most subsequent editions reads "*Lettere . . . Aggiuntovi* <sic> *di nuovo li Ragionamenti piacevoli dell'istessa . . .*". A new section is added to the volume; and on a separate title page to that section we read "*Fragmenti di alcune scritture della Signora Isabella Andreini . . . raccolti da Francesco Andreini . . .* ". So "*Ragionamenti*" and "*Fragmenti*" are alternative titles for the same texts, which are added to editions of the *Lettere* from 1616 onwards. They bear a separate preface by Francesco Andreini himself. Editions after the Combi one of 1620 may also include a short dedicatory letter from Flaminio Scala,[6] the *capocomico* who was clearly a friend of the Andreini couple, and who included parts both for "Isabella" and for "Capitano Spavento" in most of his scenarios printed in 1611.

So the situation seems relatively simple, on the face of it. There are four editions (so far fully confirmed) of Isabella's *Lettere* alone,

5 Taviani (1984) explains it thus: "è piú di una finzione letteraria, è la personificazione di quell'idea per cui si dice che il morto sopravvive nelle sue opere. Con il gioco della data, Francesco materializza ciò che la voce di Isabella dice nella dedica" (It is more than a literary fiction, it is a personification of the idea by which it is said that a dead person survives in his/her works. By playing with the date, Francesco puts into material terms what Isabella's voice says in the Dedication). This may indeed be the effect for which Francesco was aiming; but he could still have been exploiting the existence of a text already drafted by Isabella. Daria Perocco is convinced that Francesco wrote the whole letter (2007, 90); however, cf. our footnote 28 below.

6 Daria Perocco (2004) quotes this letter from the Venetian edition of 1627 (misprinted as 1527 in her footnote 43). She assumes wrongly that Scala's letter must also appear in the 1617 edition, which she takes to be the first printing of the *Fragmenti*: both in 2004 and in 2007 she seems unaware of the Torinese edition of 1616.

from 1607 to 1612.[7] Then, from 1616, the *Lettere* are no longer printed separately, but have the *Ragionamenti/Fragmenti* as a kind of *Parte seconda*. Jeanine Basso (1990) lists fifteen editions (with minor variants in terms of exactly what they contain), the last one appearing as late as 1663.[8] However, in terms of single copies in libraries, the situation is not so simple. The fact that the *Fragmenti* are preceded by their own title page means that they can be separated physically from the *Lettere*. Individual copies in library catalogues sometimes claim to contain only the *Lettere*, or only the *Fragmenti*: but what a catalogue records from a title page may turn out to be inaccurate. (For example the copy of the 1627 Combi edition in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, does not include the *Fragmenti*, despite what it says on the title page and in the catalogue.) Probably this means that every edition, from the Torinese one of 1616 down to the Venetian one by Conzatti in 1663, printed both sections, and that these were sometimes in two distinct volumes or sometimes just broken apart; but only a physical inspection of every known copy will confirm the exact situation. Such an inspection would involve visiting all relevant libraries in Italy and elsewhere – particularly in France, where Basso's *Répertoire* shows that a substantial number of copies of Isabella's works have been preserved.

The *Fragmenti*, or *Ragionamenti*, are a different type of text from the *Lettere*. They are dialogues in prose, between pairs of characters (always one man and one woman) with Classical-sounding names such as Attilio and Diotima, Ersilia and Diomede, Palamede and Cleopatra. The titles of the dialogues make them sound like formal academic debates: "Contrasto se ogni amato convien che ami" (Argument on whether every person who is loved has to love in return); "Contrasto sopra la Gelosia" (Argument about jealousy), even "Contrasto sopra la Comedia" (Argument about Comedy). Piermario Vescovo thus categorises them as "non già micro-dialoghi teatrali, ma pezzi identici ai precedenti" (not theatrical micro-dialogues,

7 1607 and 1610, Venezia: Zaltieri; 1611, Torino: Tarino; 1612, Venezia: Combi.

8 1616, 1621, and 1628, Torino: Tarino; 1617, 1620, 1624, 1625, 1627, 1634, 1638, Venezia: Combi; 1620, Venezia: Cavalleri; 1647, 1652, Venezia: Guerrigli; 1647, Venezia: Minerva; 1663, Venezia: Conzatti. Basso identifies certain printings as being typographically identical to previous ones from the same publisher.

but pieces identical to the previous ones) – identical that is to the *Lettere*, which he sees in turn as containing largely "disquisizione teorica" (theoretical disquisition) (1991, 87). We shall look harder at the *Lettere* below; but to represent the dialogues contained in the *Fragmenti* as dispassionate debates, with no inherent dramatic content, is a conclusion which might be drawn from reading their titles, but it is not borne out by the dialogues themselves. One item which has long been known to scholars is the scene reproduced by Vito Pandolfi in his *Commedia dell'Arte* compendium (1957-1961, vol. 2, 58-60). The characters Valerio and Fedra are listed as debating "sopra il finger d'amar una & amar l'altra" (on pretending to love one woman but really loving another); but this exchange is in fact a devastating quarrel, which drives the male partner Valerio insane, and ends with him delivering a long demented tirade. His speech is one of the few surviving seventeenth-century texts to give us concrete information about the style and content of 'mad scenes' for lovers on stage (which is no doubt why Pandolfi included it in his anthology).

In fact every one of these dialogues contains a strong element of erotic tension between the two interlocutors: the apparently academic arguments are excuses for complex, allusive verbal sparring between two people who have emotional issues to resolve. We can always deduce rapidly what is the situation between them; and each *Ragionamento* ends on a note of uncertainty which would need to be developed or resolved in later scenes of their drama, scenes which of course have not been written. Sometimes the suspense is hopeful – the man may be invited to approach the woman's father and ask for her hand in marriage – but in other cases much less so.

Two examples will reinforce and explain these generalisations. In the "Amoroso Contrasto sopra le Armi e le Lettere" (Amorous Debate on Arms and Letters), the male interlocutor Alessandro is a stage Capitano who predictably argues in favour of the soldier rather than the scholar.[9] But the pair agree in advance that if the

9 A debate on this subject is set up in 1.3 of Flaminio Scala's Giornata 14, *Il pellegrino fido amante*, between Pantalone and his daughter Flaminia; and the servant Franceschina is drawn into it in the following scene.

lady Corina is seen to win their argument, then Alessandro must change his attitude and begin to love her, rather than hate her as he currently does. (There is a very confused reference to the pact made between Rodomonte and Isabella in Canto XXIX of the *Orlando furioso*: both characters seem to forget that this is a bad example – because it ends in violence, and because Rodomonte never intended to keep his promises). By the end of the exchange, it is not really clear who has won the debate, though the longest concluding speech is given to the woman. But Alessandro agrees to love Corina anyway: the suggestion that he was only pretending to hate her from the start, or was emotionally ambivalent, hints at an interesting piece of potential drama.[10]

Another *Ragionamento* which would seem from its title to be entirely academic is the one between Safo and Eurialo: the "Contrasto sopra la Tragedia e il Poema Heroico" (Argument about Tragedy and the Heroic Poem) (Marotti and Romei 1991, 206-8). But closer reading shows that it is not academic or passionless at all. Eurialo has sent a sonnet of love to Safo, and their discussion of poetic genres is a displaced erotic confrontation. "Dividiamo le parti", says Safo, "cioè uno di noi serva per lo poema eroico e l'altro per la tragedia" (Let's divide our roles: that is, one of us can stand fpr the heroic poem and the other stand for tragedy). She assigns their roles according to grammatical gender, so that she identifies with Tragedy and he takes the part of the epic. Eurialo is then unable to sustain his side of the argument, and is dismissed:

> Andate, andate, signor poema eroico, a trattar con le vostre molte favole che ponete per ornamento dell'amor vostro, e me lasciate nella grandezza mia e nello stato mio reale.
>
> [Go away, go away, Mr Heroic Poem, and converse with those many fables with which you decorate your love, and leave me with my greatness and my royal status.]

The argument was not about literary theory at all, it was about Eurialo's passion for Safo ("l'amor vostro", as she says); and having

10 This is the only dialogue from the *Fragmenti* examined by Vazzoler 2004, 128-9.

been defeated, he withdraws in angry confusion. In contrast to Piermario Vescovo, I see all these *Ragionamenti* as indeed "micro-dialoghi teatrali". There is no reason for not treating them as evidence – 'fragmentary', as their alternative title suggests, but evidence none the less – for the content and methodology of dramatic dialogues in the early 17th century. The fact that they can also function as debates on chosen themes, and therefore may also be readable as independent compositions, is a sign of some sophistication on the part of their author, but does not detach them from a theatrical context.

The problem about the *Fragmenti* as opposed to the *Lettere* – and a reason for dealing with them first – is that there may be some doubts about who that sophisticated author was. They do not appear in print until 1616, twelve years after the death of Isabella Andreini. The role of Francesco Andreini in assembling and publishing them is explicitly acknowledged, both in title pages and in a preface which he has signed. In that preface (Marotti and Romei 1991, 202-3), he refers more than once to "queste *mie* poche fatiche" (these small efforts *of mine;* emphasis mine), and leaves us uncertain about how much of the work which he is presenting should be credited to Isabella and how much to himself. Marotti and Romei are prepared, in their own introduction, to state that the *Fragmenti* are "costituiti da scritti di Francesco" (1991, 164; made up of writings by Francesco) as well as including material by Isabella, and this may very well be the case. (We could wonder, for example, why that dialogue between Valerio and Fedra, reproduced by Pandolfi, ends with a long insane speech for a male lover, when it was Isabella the *prima donna* who was famous for her virtuosic 'mad scenes'). None of this is true of the *Lettere*, which never claim any author other than Isabella, and whose dedicatory letter is also attributed to her even though (as we have seen) it is notionally dated 1607. With the *Fragmenti* we are certainly in the realm of the 'Actor/Author' (*the title of this 2013 collected volume*), but perhaps not entirely sure which actor we are dealing with.

The *Lettere* themselves are printed as 151 items. 150 of them have titles, sometimes very approximate ones, and the title of one is just a row of dots, to which the word "Amante" is added in

later editions. (The full list of titles is given, with one omission,[11] by Marotti and Romei 1991, 197-201). The collection thus presents itself as an attempt, which misfired slightly, to divide an unarticulated collection of paragraphs, sentences and conceits into a round number of 150 compositions. (I shall say more below about editorial combinations of disparate pieces of material). The titles are repetitive and often unhelpful: some of them just say "Simili", or "Del medesimo", implying that the theme of the previous "letter" is being continued. The word "Scherzi" (or "Scherzo") is used no fewer than eighteen times as a description of the content, increased then by fifteen more cases of "Simili" to describe immediately following letters. In addition, it must be observed that the editorial attempt to impose order on the *Lettere* has been hasty and not always accurate. Some of the titles seem attached to the wrong pieces. 'No. 4' is entitled "Delle percosse della Fortuna", but is not about that subject at all. The title should have been given to 'no. 5', which is called "Segni di perfetto amore"; that title in turn should belong to 'no. 6' (reproduced by Marotti & Romei, pp. 168-69), whose title "Della bellezza humana" fits the content of 'no. 7'.

(The numbers given above are in quotation marks, because there is no numeration in the original volume. In order to produce a usable modern edition of this book,[12] it would be necessary to give numbers to the 151 items, because without them both editor and readers would soon get lost. I have in fact numbered the individual *Lettere* in my own working notes, and shall use those numbers in references within this essay).

What sort of writing is contained in Isabella Andreini's *Lettere*; and to what extent are they truly "letters"? There are suggestions on some reference websites that they simply convey reflections by Isabella herself on her attitudes to life, as though they were

11 There are two letters entitled "Simili" after the title "Querele di sfortunato amante": Marotti and Romei only list one of them, on page 201. If we were to number the items, this would mean that no. 146 is missing from their list.

12 There is a modern edition of the *Lettere* in Brandt 2002. It is described by Daria Perocco as "non priva di gravi errori ed imperfezioni" (not free from serious errors and imperfections). I have preferred to consult 17th-century printings.

some kind of diary or book of meditations. Such a view ignores some elementary facts about the text. Most of the pieces construct situations which are fictional, and therefore potentially dramatic. They explore invented love stories, often involving agitated emotions; and there are short sequences of letters which continue, or respond to, each other, sometimes creating an embryonic narrative. Most of all, a good proportion of them are written in a male persona rather than a female one, which makes it impossible to see them as Isabella's own reflections. However, they do tend to maintain an epistolary façade.[13] Most present themselves as love letters addressed by a woman to a man, or by a man to a woman; while a few are addressed by a man to a male friend, asking for advice or sympathy in a difficult situation. When a *Lettera* does consist of sober philosophical reflection, it still pretends to be talking to somebody – one way of looking at the shorter pieces would be to see them as prose versions of sonnets, which by long tradition tend to imply an addressee. In fact, if we survey Isabella Andreini's published writing as a whole, it is soon apparent that she prefers if possible to disclaim all personal participation in any of the emotions she expresses. (The obvious exceptions would be in compositions where there is an element of tribute or encomium from herself to a patron or friend, as is the case with a number of her *Rime*.) It is well known that in the much-quoted sonnet which introduces those same *Rime*, she states very firmly that her poems are dramatic, and therefore fictional, exercises – that she is assuming identities other than her own in order to explore and express a range of emotions:

> E come ne' Teatri, or donna e ora
> uom fei rappesentando in vario stile
> quanto volle insegnar Natura e Arte . . .[14]

13 Daria Perocco's comment (2004, 27) that the *Lettere* are "ovviamente tali solo per il titolo" (obviously [letters] only in terms of their title) is not a refusal to recognise their epistolary form, but rather a way of underlining their essentially fictional nature. See also footnote 26 below.

14 The full text of this sonnet is reproduced in Andrews 2000, essay no. 9 in the present volume.

> [. . . and just as, in theatres, now as a woman and now / as a man, performing in varied style / I created whatever Nature and Art would teach me . . .]

Central to Isabella's whole approach to writing was the act of impersonation. This is partly because she was a professional actress, and so impersonation was her trade, the artisan skill which she practised. But it was also, we can propose, because role-playing acted as a screen which preserved her personal decorum. It was the only basis on which she could pursue her dual ambition: on the one hand to achieve a cultural status equal to that available to her male equivalents, by exploring human life and emotion on the stage and on the page; but on the other hand to prove that one could do this without ceasing to be a virtuous wife and mother.[15] Impersonation in fact gave her considerable liberty: we can deduce how far she was prepared to go on stage from the scenarios of Flaminio Scala (1976).[16] One of Scala's purposes in compiling his collection was to celebrate Isabella, to preserve her memory, by showing the range of different roles she could perform. So in *Isabella astrologa* (Scala's Giornata 36) the leading lady commands the stage with intellectual wisdom; in *La pazzia d'Isabella* (Giornata 38), the heroine moves the audience to tears with her plight; but in other scenarios we also see Isabella as a vengeful lover (Giornata 25, *Isabella gelosa*), as a daughter pregnant out of wedlock (Giornata 21, *Il finto negromante*), and as a tricky adulterous wife deploying sexual double-entendres (Giornata 6, *Il vecchio geloso*). Moreover, in thirteen scenarios out of Scala's fifty Isabella appears at some point in male disguise, sometimes with very little pretext, as though this was something which her public appreciated and expected to see.[17] So in her *Rime*, and now in these

15 Daria Perocco (2004) has pertinent things to say about Isabella's obsession in the *Lettere* themselves with the theme of female honour.

16 Now also available is *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala. A translation and analysis of thirty scenarios* (2008, edited and translated by Richard Andrews).

17 The relevant scenarios are Giornate 10, 11, 14, 16, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 34, 35, and 40. In Giornata 10, *La sposa*, Isabella in male disguise pursues Flaminia across the stage with a sword, intending to kill her.

Lettere, she performs as "now as a woman and now as a man"; and when the emotions and episodes which she interprets are less than respectable, she can always retreat behind the actor's excuse: "It isn't me! – it's him, it's her, it's the character!".

The most telling example, to support these statements, is the very first letter in the collection, now reproduced in full as an Appendix to the present essay. This is the composition which will set the tone for the whole volume of *Lettere*, and will tell us as readers what sort of book we are dealing with. Its first two sentences are striking and unequivocal:

> Per quelle parti che meno in me vi dispiacciono, pregovi ad aver un poco piú di riguardo all'onor mio, per l'avvenire, di quello che v'abbiate avuto per lo passato. Lo passeggiar, che fate di continuo sotto le mie finestre, mi fa aver mala vita dal marito, e cattivo nome dalla vicinanza.
>
> [As regards those of my qualities which displease you least, I beg you to have a little more regard for my honour, in future, than you have shown in the past. Your continual walks up and down under my windows cause me to have unpleasant times from my husband, and a bad name in the neighbourhood.]

So the first thing we read, in a volume written by Isabella Andreini and edited by her husband Francesco, are the words of a wife who is being pestered by an adulterous suitor, and who is frightened of her husband's possible reaction. We cannot possibly read this as referring to the life of the real Isabella and Francesco; so we know immediately that we are faced with an invented story, and that the other 150 letters are likely to be in the same vein. It is also, of course, a story which has clear dramatic potential, and could be the opening situation of a *commedia dell'arte* play.

The letter then continues with a string of reflections on the theme which has been given as title to the piece: "Di quanto preggio sia l'onore" (On the high value of honour). They are commonplaces, which indeed could have been noted in an actress's 'commonplace book' – in Isabella's professional *zibaldone*, or *libro generico*. Most of the individual sentences are detachable conceits, utilisable on their own, transferable to suitable speeches in any play. For example: "Il

proprio seggio dell'huomo è la terra, de gli uccelli l'aria, e de' pesci l'acqua, e della donna l'honestà, non cercate vi prego di levarmi dal mio proprio seggio" (The proper abode of man is the earth, of birds it is the air, of women it is honesty; I beg you not to attempt to remove me from my proper abode). They make sense together, in this sequence; but they would also make sense separately. From the start we can see how these *Lettere* are temporary combinations of rhetorical *concetti*, assembled here and then possibly repeated elsewhere – in exactly the same way as commonplace units of plot are assembled, combined, and repeated, in *commedia dell'arte* scenarios.

At the end of what we present below as the first paragraph (there is no paragraphing in the editions which I have seen), the phrase "vi baccio le mani" (I kiss your hands) seems to bring the letter to an end. But in fact it continues into a second section, which doubles its length. The second 'paragraph' could easily have appeared as a separate letter in the collection, with a title such as "Del silenzio" (On silence) – and if it had appeared thus, then the titles of "Letters 4-7" might not have been misplaced, as described above. A woman explores concepts of her own modesty in the face of her lover's eloquence; and discusses the propriety of maintaining silence, especially for the female sex. Then, however, she stresses how difficult it will be for her lover to organise a meeting with her "senz'esser da' miei parenti sentito" (without it being heard of by my family); but says that if he does manage it she will be delighted ("ne rimarrò contentissima"). This is a different attitude from the one expressed at the beginning: from the opening sentences, we would not have anticipated that the woman wanted any kind of meeting with her pestering suitor. Either we must resign ourselves to reading 'Letter no. 1' as two separate pieces of prose casually thrust together; or else it expresses a calculated emotional ambivalence, in which an initial public attitude of outrage and refusal covers a more private willingness to pursue a love affair, provided it remains secret. However we look at it, this text does not give us an insight into the private thoughts or philosophy of Isabella Andreini: it is a piece of ventriloquism, or potentially a piece of dramaturgy, with speeches being created either for one fictional female character or for two.

For present purposes, this example will have to stand alone; but a continued reading of any of the other *Lettere* will confirm their fundamentally theatrical nature.

We could conclude with a larger observation. We are arguing that the large number of verbal and rhetorical *concetti* grouped together, sometimes almost at random, in Isabella Andreini's *Lettere* would serve for her as a database of sentences and expressions which she could combine into suitable speeches, when improvising on stage. In their printed form, they read as an attempt to make literary use of the material accumulated in her professional commonplace book. We know that *commedia dell'arte* actors, as well as accumulating their own private notes, both composed and consulted printed books which would serve this purpose – collections of material which could serve as examples of verbal formulations and could even be directly quoted. The point has been made by Siro Ferrone, but not yet followed up in detail, that a large number of the works composed and published by actors are presented as '*Lettere*' (1985,18-22).[18] The comic letters of Andrea Calmo, first published in 1547, were used as reference material by actors playing Pantalone; and Calmo himself, of course, was an actor who played comic Venetian roles. The list of 'theatrical' letter-composers can be extended by including writers who were dramatists rather than actors; and others who were theoreticians of theatre, such as Angelo Ingegneri. In Jeanine Basso's comprehensive *Répertoire* of "le genre épistolaire en langue italienne", there are at least fifteen authors of *Lettere* who have a theatrical connection.[19] We could swell the list with names such as Ruzante and Giovanni Gabrielli, men who published single letters rather than whole collections.

It could be proposed that the *genre épistolaire* in Renaissance Italy has something of the character of *Études* for the pianoforte

18 The observation has also been developed by Daria Perocco and by Franco Vazzoler, in their respective essays of 2004. Perocco remarks on the tendency of *Lettere* collections to become fictional: 'si avviano verso il romanzo epistolare" (2004, 27; They approach the status of epistolary novels).

19 My list would comprise Andrea Calmo; Girolamo Parabosco; Cesare Rao; Alvise Pasqualigo; Luca Contile; Antonio Vignali; Bernardino Pino; Vincenzo Belando; Battista Guarini; Angelo Ingegneri; Luigi Groto; Isabella Andreini; Pier Maria Cecchini; Lodovico Bianchi; and Margherita Costa.

in the 19th century: authors aimed to produce pieces which were pleasing in their own right, but which also acted as models, examples, or exercises in composition to be referred to by readers who themselves wanted to be writers. It seems that there was a substantial number of such *Études* which might have a function for readers who wanted to practise speaking on stage, as well as (or instead of) writing.

However, it must be noted that the dedicatory letter to Isabella Andreini's *Lettere*, formally dated 1607, explicitly denies that the contents of the volume are intended to act as examples to others. Isabella (if indeed it is she) says:

> se alcuna <*sic*> dicesse che fu sempre intenzione di chi mandò lettere alle stampe d'insegnar il vero modo di scriverle, sappia quel tale <*sic*>[20] ch'io non ebbi mai cosí temerario pensiero, sapendo ch'è solamente dato a gli uomini piú intendenti l'avere e 'l conseguir simil fine.[21]
>
> [And if anyone (f.) were to say that people who have sent letters to be printed have always intended to teach how to write them properly, let that person (m.) know that I have never had such a rash thought, knowing that it is only given to wiser men (*sic*) to pursue and achieve such a goal.]

Although one has to pay some attention to what authors say about their own work, I would propose that this is a case of excessive, and ultimately false, modesty. These recyclings and permutations of extremely commonplace concepts and formulations can have very little other function than to act as models or resources, to be plundered and recycled in their turn. Isabella's collection of *Lettere* (however much edited and re-worked by Francesco) belongs to an established genre of writings in epistolary form published by theatre practitioners; and this fact too needs to be taken into account in any larger or more detailed study. The *Ragionamenti* or *Fragmenti*, in

20 The shifts of grammatical gender, in this extract and the following one, are noteworthy. Perhaps Francesco Andreini intervened on an existing text (originally by Isabella?) in ways which were ultimately inconsistent.

21 This quotation and the following one are transcribed from the 1627 edition of the *Lettere*.

dramatic dialogue form, are also literary trasformations of pieces of theatre repertoire.

What we can take entirely literally, on the other hand, are the words which immediately follow the above quotation, and bring the dedicatory letter to an end:

> Intention mia dunque fu di schermirmi quanto piú io poteva dalla morte; ammaestrata cosí dalla Natura: perciò non doverà parer estrano ad alcuno, s'io ho mandato, e se tuttavia mando, nelle mani de gli huomini gli scritti miei, poiché ogn'uno <*sic*> desidera naturalmente d'haver in se stessa *(sic)*, e 'n suoi parti, se non perpetua almeno lunghissima vita, e per conseguirla piú facilmente, ho eletto di dedicar questa forse non ultima fatica a V.A. Serenissima.
>
> [My intention was in fact to shield myself as far as possible from death, being instructed in this by Nature. Therefore it ought not to seem strange to anyone if I have sent out, and continue to send out, my writings into men's hands, since everyone (m.) naturally desires to have for herself *(sic)* and her talents, if not perpetual life, then at least very long life; and to achieve that more easily I have chosen to dedicate this, perhaps not my last, labour to Your Most Serene Highness.]

Isabella Andreini, like many actors, was haunted by the ephemeral nature of her art. We have now passed the fourth centenary of her death: for her writings, the hoped-for 'very long life' seems to have been achieved.

Appendix

Isabella Andreini, *Lettere*

[Letter 'No. 1' in the volume]

[This is a diplomatic transcription, in which only the accents have been 'modernised'. It is taken from the copy in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, of the 1627 Venetian edition by Giovan Battista Combi. The division into two paragraphs is an editorial addition, and does not appear in the original.]

Di quanto preggio sia l'honore

Per quelle parti, che meno in me vi dispiacciono, pregovi ad haver un poco piú di riguardo all'honor mio per l'avvenire, di quello, che v'habbiate havuto per lo passato. Lo passeggiar, che fate di continuo sotto le mie finestre, mi fa haver mala vita dal marito, e cattivo nome dalla vicinanza. Siate dunque piú geloso della mia riputazione, che non siete stato, e ricordatevi, che'l dishonor è peggio della morte, perché la morte con un colpo uccide un solo, e'l dishonore con un colpo uccide le famiglie intiere, e tanto piú facilmente, quanto piú son grandi. Voi sapete, che sí come l'honor è un segno della virtú, cosí'l dishonore è un segno del vitio. Quando per mia disgratia dunque io volassi dishonoratamente per le lingue e per gli orecchi delle genti sarebbe segno di vitio, che in me fosse, il che non essendo poi in effetto mi darebbe occasione di viver sempre infelice, e sarebbe un peso cosí greve, e cosí aspro, che in questo mar tempestoso della vita, innanzi tempo mi trarebbe al fondo. Il proprio seggio dell'huomo è la terra, de gli uccelli l'aria, e de' pesci l'acqua, e della donna l'honestà, non cercate vi prego di levarmi dal mio proprio seggio. Io ho tanto giuditio, ch'io conosco l'honore valer molto piú della vita perché'l viver è commune a tutte le cose animate: ma 'l viver honoratamente è sol proprio dell'huomo, e dell'huomo prudente: e perché questa voce dell'huomo è generale: & abbraccia l'huomo, e la donna, essendo io compresa sotto questo nome, cercherò di governarmi prudentemente, & honoratamente. Non vi sia discaro di rilegger questa mia, e se m'amate, se desiderate (come dite) di servirmi,

fattevi legge del mio voler, e non frequentate piú questa strada dell'altre, e vi baccio le mani.

Desiderando io, che'l silentio coprisse il mancamento del mio ingegno ho tardato tanto a rispondervi, oltre di ciò ho creduto sempre, e credo, che'l modesto silentio di donna agguagli la facondia, e l'eloquenza de' piú purgati intelletti. Pare a me, che'l silentio sia ornamento di qual si voglia persona, e quando uno non sa tacere, si può agevolmente credere, ch'ei non sappia nè anche parlare. Non dico già io questo, perch'io voglia, che dal mio silentio facciate argomento infallibile, che sapendo tacere io sappia ancor parlare, che quanto a me, sí come so di saper tacer cosí ancor so, ch'io non so nulla, dico bene, che non mi pare d'haver errato affatto se conoscendo di poter facilmente tacere, e difficilmente parlare, ho eletto il silentio. La vostra dottissima lettera richiedeva, e'l mio gran desiderio mi spronava, ch'io rispondessi, con tutto ciò sarei stata poco accorta s'havessi voluto o bene, o male inconsideratamente formar risposta, non si dee parlar prima, e pensar poi, hora, ch'ho pensato vi risponderò, ma che dich'io? quando ancora molto bene pensassi, e ripensassi, non potrei mai a tanti capi, e tutti elegantissimi, sodisfare. Nella vostra lettera si contengono cose tali, che ogn'una d'esse basterebbe per tener risvegliata l'ignoranza mia un'anno senza far alcuno profitto: brevemente dunque m'ingegnerò di risponder alla somma, e non a particolari, come la natura m'insegnerà, laquale non per altro m'imagino io ci ha dato due occhi, due orecchi, & una lingua, che per farci conoscere, che dobbiamo vedere, & udir assai, e parlar poco. La somma di quanto, mi scrivete, è che non desiderate cosa, piú che parlarmi, a che rispondo, che se Dedalo non vi presta l'ali egli è impossibile, che v'accostiate a me senz'esser da miei parenti sentito. Se voi col giuditio vostro sapete trovar modo opportuno, e commodo io per vostra sodisfatione ne rimarrò contentissima tra tanto Iddio vi dia quel contento, che io desidero, e che non posso darvi.

On the High Value of Honour

As regards those of my qualities which displease you least, I beg you to have a little more regard for my honour, in future, than you have shown in the past. Your continual walks up and down under my windows cause me to have unpleasant times from my husband, and a bad name in the neighbourhood. So please be more jealous of my reputation than you have been, and remember that dishonour is worse than death, because death with one stroke kills just one person, and dishonour with one stroke kills whole families, the more easily the greater they are. You know that just as honour is a sign of virtue, so dishonour is a sign of vice. Therefore, if my name were to fly dishonourably between people's tongues and ears, that would be a sign of a vice in me, which if I did not in fact possess it would cause me to live unhappily for ever, and would be such a heavy bitter weight to me that, in this stormy sea of life, it would drag me to the bottom before my time. The proper abode of man is the earth, of birds it is the air, of women it is honesty; I beg you not to attempt to remove me from my proper abode. I have enough judgement to know that honour is more valuable than life because living is common to all animated things, but living honourably belongs only to man, and to prudent man at that. And because the word 'man' is generic, and covers both man and woman, then being included under that name I shall attempt to behave prudently and honourably. Let it not displease you to read this letter, and if you love me, if you desire (as you say) to serve me, then let my will be your law, and do not frequent this street any more than the others; and I kiss your hands.

Since I desire that silence should shield my lack of talent, I have long delayed in replying to you; and besides I have always believed, and still believe, that a woman's modest silence is the equal of the fecundity and eloquence of the clearest minds. It seems to me that silence is an ornament to all types of person, and that when someone is unable to stay quiet, it is easily believable that he is also unable to speak. I say this not because I wish you to deduce infallibly from my silence that since I can stay quiet I too can speak: in my case, just as I know how to keep quiet I also know that I know nothing. I insist that I do not think I have erred at all if, knowing that I find

it easy to stay quiet and hard to speak, I have chosen silence. Your most erudite letter demanded, and my own desire encouraged, a response; even though I would have been unwise to compose, well or badly, an unconsidered answer. One should not speak first and reflect afterwards: now that I have reflected I shall answer you, but what should I say? Even after thinking and rethinking hard, I could never be adequate under so many elegant headings. In your letter there are things of such quality that each one of them would be enough to keep my ignorant mind awake for a whole year without any profit: I shall endeavour therefore to reply to its substance, and not to its details: this I am taught by nature which, I imagine, gave us two eyes, two ears, and one tongue for no other purpose than to teach us that we should spend more time looking and listening and less time speaking. The substance of what you write is that you have no greater desire than to speak to me. My answer is that unless Daedalus can lend you wings, it is impossible for you to approach me without it being heard of by my family. If with your ingenuity you manage to find an appropriate and convenient way, then you can be sure that I shaill be delighted. Meanwhile may God grant you that satisfaction which I desire and which I cannot give you.

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Part 3
Italian Theatre in Shakespeare and Elsewhere

11

Shakespeare, Molière, and the *Commedia dell'Arte**

The fifth act of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* opens with a famous lyrical scene between the lovers Lorenzo and Jessica. Relaxing under the stars outside Portia's house, they speak of what other famous lovers, in myth and legend, did "in such a night . . ." Their allusions to Troilus, Thisbe, Dido and Medea are standard rhetorical *topoi*, taken from a much larger list which we can find used as points of cultural reference in all European Renaissance literatures. Indeed, the dramatist shows some restraint in using only four such examples.

> LORENZO The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
> When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
> And they did make no noise, in such a night
> Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls,
> And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents
> Where Cressid lay that night.
> JESSICA In such a night
> Did Thisbe fearfully o'er trip the dew,
> And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
> And ran dismayed away.
> LORENZO In such a night
> Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
> Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love
> To come again to Carthage.
> JESSICA In such a night
> Medea gathered the enchanted herbs
> That did renew old Aeson.
> (5.1.1-17)

* This English text was delivered and printed in a French translation by Catherine Richardson.

Let us imagine that such a scene had been given, with no written script, to a pair of professional Italian actors from *commedia dell'arte* – rather than to two Elizabethan actors more disciplined by written words. It is not a ridiculous hypothesis, since a rhetorical scene of this type would have appealed to the *commedianti*. In such a case the actors themselves would become the dramatists. They would have made their dialogue much longer, though no doubt varying both its length and its content from one performance to another. Each of them would have in their professional memory-bank a large stock of suitable references: the dialogue would become a kind of symmetrical contest, not only between the characters Lorenzo and Jessica, but between the actors themselves. Their main practical difficulty, as they alternated in competition with one another, might have been to find a moment when they could agree to stop, and pass on to the next episode in the play. The scene as scripted by Shakespeare actually shows two ways in which the dialogue could be brought to an end. Lorenzo chooses, after the reference to Medea, to move away from legendary characters to his own and Jessica's 'history', and so to the *fabula* of the play: "Lorenzo In such a night / Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew . . ." (5.1.18-19). Jessica responds with a similar reminiscence, and the list of lovers thus becomes a closed one, rather than an open one. If such a solution was used in improvisation, then the actor playing Lorenzo would have effective control of the scene. It would be his decision when to mention Jessica – rather than Leander and Hero, or Paris and Helen – and the actress would be obliged to follow suit and end the exchange.

The other way of ending such a dialogue, which otherwise might never find a natural end, is to have a third character enter and interrupt it. In a drama without a script, this gives power to the third actor, who decides how long the love scene between the other two is going to last. In a hypothetical scenario we might read simply "Flavio e Isabella fanno scena di amore: in questo, Arlecchino viene e dice . . ." (Flavio and Isabella do a love scene: next, Harlequin enters and says . . .) followed by the piece of news or information which will then move the story on. Shakespeare in fact follows this sequence in *The Merchant of Venice* – but, being a poetic dramatist in control of his material, he first makes sure that

Lorenzo and Jessica reach their natural emotional goal of talking about themselves, rather than about imaginary lovers of the past. After that, he brings on two messengers – first a casual character called Stephano, and then the clown Launcelot Gobbo. Launcelot's sequence, in its entirety, goes as follows:

> LORENZO . . . But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,
> And ceremoniously let us prepare
> Some welcome for the mistress of the house.
> (*Enter Launcelot Gobbo*)
> LAUNCELOT Sola, sola! Wo ha ho! sola, sola!
> LORENZO Who calls?
> LAUNCELOT Sola! Did you see Master Lorenzo (and Mistress) Lorenzo? Sola, sola!
> LORENZO Leave holloaing, man! Here.
> LAUNCELOT Sola! Where? Where?
> LORENZO Here!
> LAUNCELOT Tell him there's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good news . . .
> (5.1.44-55)

Launcelot's text as transmitted to posterity is brief, not very impressive as a piece of comedy, even perhaps perplexing. It tends to reinforce all the modern prejudices which assume that Shakespeare's clowns are simply not very funny. But that prejudice assumes in its turn that the few words left on our pages are actually the sum total of what the clown was expected by his dramatist to say and to do. In this particular case, the clown was probably Will Kempe. It is more probable that Shakespeare simply gave up his role as dramatist for a short interval in the script, and passed control over to Kempe himself. He knew that his clown had a comic routine of his own which would last several minutes, which would be spontaneous and varied, and which it would be impossible or pointless to write down.

Martin Banham has in fact written a study of this whole scene (1991), in which every line spoken both by the lovers and by the clown has to be read in the context of the fact that the scene takes place at night-time. The lovers' dialogue, according to Banham, must involve an extended attempt by the actors to create the illusion of

night on a day-time Elizabethan stage – using bodily signs as well as the dialogue itself. Then when the clown comes on, he must exploit the simple comic device by which he cannot see the people he is looking for – for example, using Banham's suggestions, "confusing one character with another, talking to the stage pillars, almost falling off the stage into the audience . . ." The boring repetition on the page of "Sola!", "Here!", and "Where?" is thus no more than a brief reminder – to the actors, or to a subsequent reader – of the longer scene which was actually performed, most of which would be impossible to notate in detail in a written script.[1] However, the one line which had to be written very clearly, both in the script and in Will Kempe's memory, was the line which would bring the routine to an end, convey Launcelot's message, and bring us back to the story: "Tell him there's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good news . . ." The important thing about improvising on stage – whether the material is a lovers' dialogue or a piece of clownish nonsense – is to know when, and how, to stop. Provided that you have a final line or a final speech to aim at, the main body of the scene can be as long or as short as you choose, on the night of any one performance. This principle of elasticity – what I have referred to elsewhere as 'the elastic gag'[2] – must underline a great deal of improvisation in *commedia dell'arte*. I would also wish to argue that it is not exclusive to the *arte* genre. The same structures can occur, or can at least be reflected, in other types of theatre, both improvised and scripted.

A theory like this becomes more plausible if one can show examples of what is essentially the same scene, or the same comic device, used in different dramatic sources but written each time in different words. It happens that I have found one other example of Launcelot Gobbo's 'elastic gag': that is, another routine in which one character delays talking to another because he cannot see him or, in this case, pretends he cannot. This is a brief scene from a

1 "The potential for slapstick comedy here is endless, with the clown having fun with the 'night' by – perhaps – confusing one character with another, talking to the stage pillars, almost falling off the edge of the stage into the audience . . . One thing is certain: he would extend the fun as long as he could, and the audience would love him for it!" (Banham 1991, 272)

2 See Andrews 1991, essay no. 4 in this present volume.

Venetian comedy by Lodovico Dolce – *La Fabritia*, published in 1549. Here the mischievous boy servant Turchetto frustrates his master Pomponino by looking for him everywhere on the stage except where Pomponino actually is:

> TURCHETTO Il Domine è qua: voglio finger di non vederlo. Chi saprebbe insegnarmi il mio padrone?
> POMPONINO Tu non mi vedi, perdigiornate?
> TURCHETTO Chi me lo insegna? Chi me lo insegna il mio padrone?
> POMPONINO Dove riguardi, bufalo? Volgiti in qua, che mi vederai.
> TURCHETTO Il mio da ben padrone, il mio da ben padrone, chi me lo insegna?
> POMPONINO Questo bestiolo dee esser divenuto cieco e sordo, che non mi vede né sente.
> TURCHETTO O padrone amoroso, padron savio, padron dotto, dove sete voi?
> POMPONINO Io son qua, asinetto; io son qua, babbuino; io son qua, civettino.
> TURCHETTO Padrone! Io era tanto fitto con l'animo per dirvi una baia, che non vi vedeva né udiva!
> (4.3)

> [TURCHETTO Old Sir is over there – I'll pretend not to see him. Does anyone know where my master is? / POMPONINO Can't you see me, time-waster? / TURCHETTO Does anyone know? Does anyone know where my master is? / POMPONINO Where are you looking, you bumpkin? Turn this way, and you'll see me. / TURCHETTO My dear old master, my dear old master, has anyone seen him? / POMPONINO This idiot must have gone blind and deaf, he can't see me or hear me. / TURCHETTO Master! Sweet master, wise master, learned master, where are you? / POMPONINO I'm here, you donkey, I'm here, you great baboon, I'm here, you little flirt. / TURCHETTO Master! My head was so full of the story I had to tell you, that I couldn't see or hear a thing.][3]

Once again we can read the scene as 'elastic': it could easily be longer than what is recorded, and in any case it would be lengthened and complicated by the way in which both characters have to move

3 All translations here are my own, unless otherwise attributed.

around the stage. Pomponino must try to make himself known to Turchetto by standing in front of him and waving; and the boy must invent movements and evasions which allow him obstinately not to see the obvious figure of his master. In both this version of the joke and the one used by Will Kempe, movement and gesture are as important as words if the scene is to realise its full potential.

The text, in both cases, is therefore subsidiary to what we could call the comic idea – and we can identify the same idea in both scenes, even though there is not a single verbal correspondence between the two. This perhaps helps us now, as scholars or historians, to avoid an elementary error. In other types of literature we might be tempted to trace what we normally call a textual (or intertextual) relationship, either direct or indirect, between the two pieces of writing. But in fact it is not necessary to propose that Shakespeare, or Will Kempe, had ever read Dolce's *Fabritia*, or even that they had read an intermediary written play script which passed Dolce's idea on. A comic idea, in this sense, rapidly becomes the patrimony of the theatrical profession, and can be transmitted by oral means, even across linguistic boundaries, from one clown to another without ever being written down at all. Lodovico Dolce himself may have picked it up from an already existing oral theatrical repertoire.

What, in this case, does the 'comic idea' consist of? Simply that the clown must delay for as long as possible, by whatever means possible, the moment when he admits that he can see the other character on stage. It does not matter what words he uses – and so the scene can pass easily from one language to another, or use quite different words for successive perfomances even in a single language. However, certain structural, rather than verbal, characteristics remain constant. The clown must accumulate a series of different evasive devices, so that the audience can enjoy his variety and his virtuosity. At the same time, these devices have a repetitive effect, since they all fulfil the single function of avoiding contact between the two characters. The repetition, in its turn, involves two characters and not just one. The second person on stage must alternate expressions of his own frustration with the various evasive inventions of the clown. This is essential in order to communicate the full sense of comic tension which is built up by the delay. All this in a context where the climax of the scene is entirely

predictable – both the audience and the improvising actors know that eventually Turchetto must admit that he sees Pomponino, or that Launcelot must eventually find Lorenzo in the dark. For the actors this provides security, and limits the danger involved in having no fixed written script: they know how their sequence must end, and can move to their conclusion at the first sign of uncertainty in themselves, or of boredom in the audience. For the audience the scene provides laughter which would not otherwise be there. A totally banal event – "character A sees and recognises character B" – acquires a comic significance which it would not normally have, simply by being postponed in an atmosphere of frustration.

Accumulation, repetition, alternation, delay – these, I suggest, are structural features of the scene which remain constant in every version. If we look at the lovers' dialogue in Shakespeare, we find that repetition also involves symmetry – perhaps both scenes in their different ways, have a structure of competition between characters. All these words summarise a process of performance, rather than a textual tradition. The Australian scholar Tim Fitzpatrick, in his study published in 1995, has tried to distinguish, for those of us who attempt to study *commedia dell'arte*, between 'theatre as process' and 'theatre as product'. In his view, the process of creating theatre by improvisation from a repertoire involves a methodology also found in other cultures where texts, including non-theatrical ones, are transmitted by oral means. He proposes that this methodology can be studied in its own right, separately from the specific theatrical experience, or 'product', which *commedia dell'arte* is known to have provided – that is, its characteristic stories, relationships, masks, stock characters and scenes. Perhaps we should be more cautious about separating 'process' and 'product' too often, since in the phenomenon as we usually study it the two are often interdependent. But the distinction may be of use in any attempt to perceive links between *commedia dell'arte* and the English dramatic tradition, including Shakespeare.

It is usually difficult to prove much direct influence of Italian *commedianti* on Shakespeare and his contemporaries, even though some Italian troupes are known to have visited England. Pantalone, the Doctor, the Captain, Pedrolino and Colombina are hard to identify in English scripts, and when we do see traces of them they

seem enormously transformed by the existing national style. Don Armado and his boy Moth, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, may offer distant echoes of Capitano Spavento and his parasite Trappola – but the echoes are indeed very distant, and a number of other models also seem to contribute. Launcelot Gobbo does not, for most of the time, seem very much like Arlecchino. But if we stop looking so hard for exactly similar *characters* in the two traditions – for similar 'product', in Fitzpatrick's terms – and concentrate instead on the underlying *structures*, or 'processes', which inform different types of scene, then we may find it easier to perceive that Shakespeare and the Italians do belong to a single, though varied, European theatrical culture. And even in the realm of 'product', we might see more connections than have been seen before, if we take up the concept of 'theatergrams' as proposed by Louise George Clubb in her important book of 1989.

The direct influence of *commedia dell'arte* on French theatre is much less controversial, and the suggestions which I am about to make about Molière can be complemented by a number of similar observations. I do not need to demonstrate that Molière knew the work of Italian comic actors – it is an accepted historical fact. What I shall do on this occasion is to continue with my search for examples of scenes, dialogues and structures which are 'elastic' and repetitive, and which can thus be seen to reflect or derive from the practices of improvisation. My examples will just be a small selection among many, because there are many passages in Molière's work which can be seen to possess these characteristics. In addition, however, one must observe from the start that in Molière the influence of Italian 'product' is just as apparent as is his use of the 'process' of improvisation; and although Fitzpatrick's distinction remains a useful one from the methodological point of view, these two aspects of *commedia dell'arte* are often transmitted together, rather than separately, into the work of the French master.

This is certainly the case in the earliest example, chronologically, which I would want to mention. In the one-act farce *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, the figure of the Docteur is clearly a very close relative of the Dottor Graziano of Italian scenarios and scripts. Cesare Molinari has characterised the Dottore as a 'verbal mask', whose comedy was drawn principally from long distorted speeches and

tirades. Molière's Docteur clearly fits this description. However, we can also see in that play how the Dottore's characteristics also favour an extended 'elastic' dialogue structure. In *Barbouillé*, the Docteur has in fact nothing at all to contribute to the plot. Every time he is brought on stage, he merely interrupts the action, postpones any development, and leaves every other character wishing that they had never consulted him in the first place. In scene 2 of this play he relentlessly pursues a description of his own merits, despite every attempt of Barbouillé to interrupt him:

> LE DOCTEUR Sache auparavant que je ne suis pas seulement un docteur, mas que je suis une, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, et dix fois docteur.
> 1° Parce que, comme l'unité est la base, le fondement et le premier de tous les nombres, aussi, moi, je suis le premier de tous les docteurs, le docte des doctes.
> 2° Parce qu'il y a deux facultés nécessaires pour la parfaite connoissance de toutes choses: le sens et l'entendement; et comme je suis tout sens et tout entendement, je suis deux fois docteur.
> LE BARBOUILLÉ D'accord. C'est que . . .
> LE DOCTEUR 3° Parce que le nombre de trois est celui de la perfection, selon Aristote; et comme je suis parfait, et que toutes mes productions le sont aussi, je suis trois fois docteur.
> LE BARBOUILLÉ Hé bien! Monsieur le Docteur . . .
> LE DOCTEUR 4° Parce que la philosophie a quatre parties: la logique, morale, physique et métaphysique; e comme je les possède toutes quatre, et que je suis parfaitement versé en icelles, je suis quatre fois docteur . . .

> [DOCTOR Know first of all that I am not merely a Doctor, but that I am a Doctor one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten times over. Firstly: just as the unit is the basis, the foundation and the origin of all numbers, so I am the first among Doctors, the Doctor of Doctors. Secondly: since there are two faculties necessary to perfect knowledge of all things, namely sense and understanding; and since I am all sense and all understanding, thus I am a Doctor twice over . . . / BARBOUILLÉ Absolutely. The thing is . . . / DOCTOR Thirdly: since the number three is the number of perfection, as Aristotle says; and since I and all my writings are

perfect, so I am a Doctor three times over. / BARBOUILLÉ Yes. Well now, Doctor . . . / DOCTOR Fourthly: since philosophy is divided into four parts, namely logic, ethics, physics and metaphysics; and since I possess all four, and have a perfect competence in each, I am a Doctor four times over . . .]

We can see here how a speech which for the Docteur himself is essentially a monologue becomes a dialogue of repeated alternation between his pomposity and Barbouillé's frustration.

In scene 6, he is approached by the whole company for advice about Barbouillé's marital problem; but everyone who tries to speak to him is interrupted with a series of exhortations to be brief, and nobody ever manages to explain the problem at all. Here is a typical extract from a scene which goes on for much longer:

LE DOCTEUR Il faut avouer, Monsieur Gorgibus, que c'est une belle qualité que de dire les choses en peu de paroles, et que les grands parleurs, au lieu de se faire écouter, se rendent le plus souvent si importuns qu'on ne les entend point: *Virtutem primam esse puta compescere linguam.* Oui, la plus belle qualité d'un honnête homme, c'est de parler peu.

GORGIBUS Vous saurez donc . . .

LE DOCTEUR Socrates recommandoit trois choses fort soigneusement à ses disciples: la retenue dans les actions, la sobriété dans le manger, et de dire les choses en peu de paroles. Commencez donc, Monsieur Gorgibus.

GORGIBUS C'est ce que je veux faire.

LE DOCTEUR En peu de mots, sans façon, sans vous amuser à beaucoup de discours, tranchez-moi d'un apophthegme, vite, vite, Monsieur Gorgibus, dépêchons, evitez la prolixité.

GORGIBUS Laissez-moi donc parler.

LE DOCTEUR Monsieur Gorgibus, touchez là: vous parlez trop; il faut que quelque autre me dise la cause de leur querelle.

[DOCTOR I must emphasise, Monsieur Gorgibus, that it is a great asset to be able to express oneself in few words, and that those who are long-winded, rather than being listened to, more often make themselves so tedious that nobody pays them any attention. *Virtutem primam esse puta compescere linguam.* Yes indeed: the finest characteristic of a decent man is to speak as little as

possible. / GORGIBUS Well the point is . . . / DOCTOR Socrates used to recommend most emphatically to his pupils these three things: restraint in action, moderation in eating, and brevity in speech. So, Monsieur Gorgibus, please begin. / GORGIBUS I'm trying to. / DOCTOR In few words, plainly, without beating about the bush, slay me with an epigram, quick, quick, Monsieur Gorgibus, make haste, avoid prolixity. / GORGIBUS Well let me speak, then. / DOCTOR It's no use, Monsieur Gorgibus, you are too long-winded. Someone else will have to tell me the reason for their quarrel.]

This is a classic example of a comic device which, once started, could go on for ever unless some measure is taken to break in and stop it. In fact Molière decides that the only way to conclude is to have the Docteur physically dragged off stage by the other characters. The stage direction makes it clear that at this point the actors must improvise their dialogue:

(*Le Barbouillé, Angélique, Gorgibus, Cathau, Villebrequin parlent tous à la fois, voulant dire la cause de la querelle, et le Docteur aussi, disant qua la paix est une belle chose, et font un bruit confus de leurs voix: et pendant tant de bruit, le Barbouillé attache le Docteur par le pied, et le fait tomber; le Docteur se doit laisser tomber sur le dos; le Barbouillé l'entraîne par la corde qu'il lui a attachée au pied, et, en l'entraînant, le Docteur doit toujours parler, et compter par ses doigts toutes ses raisons, comme s'il n'était point à terre, alors qu'il ne paroît plus*).

[(*Barbouillé, Angélique, Gorgibus, Cathau, Villebrequin, all try to explain the quarrel at once, with the Doctor saying at the same time that peace is a wonderful thing, and they make a confused din with their voices. During all this uproar, Barbouillé ties up the Doctor by his foot and knocks him down; the Doctor should fall on his back; Barbouillé drags him by the rope round his foot, and as he is dragged off the Doctor must go on talking and counting off his arguments on his fingers, as though he were still standing up, until he is no longer on stage*).]

Remaining with Molière's more farcical scenes, we could turn to an early moment in *L'École des Femmes,* 1.2. Once again, this is a scene where the action demanded by the plot is banal and uninteresting – Arnolphe returns home, and wants a servant to open the door

and let him in. Here, as with Dolce's Turchetto and Shakespeare's Launcelot Gobbo, we can see how such a simple event can be invested with comic tension just by delaying it for as long as possible. The two servants Alain and Georgette are initially both too lazy to open the door. Each one tells the other to go and do it, in an alternating dialogue based entirely on repetition:

> ALAIN Qui va là?
> ARNOLPHE Moi.
> ALAIN Georgette!
> GEORGETTE Hé bien?
> ALAIN Ouvre là-bas.
> GEORGETTE Vas-y, toi.
> ALAIN Vas-y, toi.
> GEORGETTE Ma foi, je n'irai pas.
> ALAIN Je n'irai pas aussi.
> ARNOLPHE Belle cérémonie
> Pour me laisser dehors. Holà, ho, je vous prie.

> [ALAIN Who's there? / ARNOLPHE It's I. / ALAIN Georgette! / GEORGETTE What? / ALAIN Open below. / GEORGETTE Do it yourself. / ALAIN You do it! / GEORGETTE I won't go! / ALAIN I won't go either! / ARNOLPHE Gracious servants, these, / To leave me standing here. Ho! If you please!]

Arnolphe loses his patience, and says that whichever one of them does *not* let him in will go without food for four days. At this point they both come rushing, and compete, again in repetitive alternating dialogue, for the privilege of opening:

> GEORGETTE Par quelle raison y venir, quand j'y cours?
> ALAIN Pourquoi plutôt que moi? Le plaisant stratagème!
> GEORGETTE Ôte-toi donc de là.
> ALAIN Non, ôte-toi, toi-même.
> GEORGETTE Je veux ouvrir la porte.
> ALAIN Et je veux l'ouvrir, moi.

> [GEORGETTE I'll get it; what are you coming for? / ALAIN Why you, not me? That's a sneaky trick to play! / GEORGETTE Get out of the

> way. / ALAIN No, you get out of the way. / GEORGETTE I want to open that door. / ALAIN I want to, too.][4]

This quarrel postpones the event for even longer, because each of them is impeding the other, and their master's frustration is complete.

The first two scenes of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui,* the quarrel between Sganarelle and Martine with the intervention of Monsieur Robert, consist quite simply of a series of 'elastic' dialogue sequences one after the other. It would take too long to quote and investigate them all here, but a close reading will show that every conversation between two of these three characters consists of each interlocutor repeating the same thing over and over again until some climax – usually an act of violence – brings the exchange to an end. The extract which I now quote comes at the end of scene 2, and consists of Sganarelle saying "Forgive me!" and Martine saying "No!", using different words each time. The conclusion appears to be forgiveness, but Martine reserves her position in an aside.

> SGANARELLE . . . O ça, faisons la paix tous deux. Touche là.
> MARTINE Oui! après m'avoir ainsi battue!
> SGANARELLE Cela n'est rien, touche.
> MARTINE Je ne veux pas.
> SGANARELLE Eh!
> MARTINE Non.
> SGANARELLE Ma petite femme!
> MARTINE Point.
> SGANARELLE Allons, te dis-je.
> MARTINE Je n'en ferai rien.
> SGANARELLE Viens, viens, viens.
> MARTINE Non: je veux être en colère.
> SGANARELLE Fi! C'est une bagatelle. Allons, allons.
> MARTINE Laisse-moi là.
> SGANARELLE Touche, te dis-je.
> MARTINE Tu m'as trop maltraîtée.
> SGANARELLE Eh bien va, je te demande pardon: mets là ta main.
> MARTINE Je te pardonne: *(elle dit le reste bas)* mais tu le payeras.

4 Translation by Richard Wilbur and Alan Drury (1982).

> [Sganarelle . . . Right then, let's make peace. Shake on it? / Martine Oh sure, after bashing me about like that! / Sganarelle Come on, that's nothing. Shake. / Martine I won't. / Sganarelle Eh? / Martine No. / Sganarelle My dear little wife. / Martine Shan't. / Sganarelle Come on, now. / Martine No way. / Sganarelle Come, come, come . . . ! / Martine No: I'm staying angry. / Sganarelle Puh! It's a trifle. Come on now. / Martine Leave me alone. / Sganarelle Shake hands, I tell you. / Martine You went too far. / Sganarelle Well then, I'll say I'm sorry. Give us your hand. / Martine All right, I forgive you. *(Aside):* But I'll get my own back.]

The reason why one links such routines to the practice of improvisation is that actors would easily be able to learn the structure of the scene without having to memorise any words. If a sequence is based on one character saying 'yes' and the other saying 'no' – or on two people competing to do the same thing; or on two people both refusing to do the same thing – then to remember the structure is enough, and small variations can be played every night without reference to a written script.

In a more detailed analysis published elsewhere,[5] I have alluded to the structure of a longer scene involving three characters, which can be broken down into a series of smaller units (what Fitzpatrick, in his analysis, calls 'interaction-units'), easy to memorise because they all involve an element of repetition. Most of these interaction-units involve dialogue between only two characters, with the third observing or eventually interrupting – this also makes it easier to remember each unit 'generically', rather than having to memorise specific dialogue. The units can be narrated as follows, without reference to the names of the characters.

1. A quarrel between parent and child, observed by a servant.

2. The servant interrupts the quarrel, and separates the parent and child to opposite sides of the stage.

3. The servant offers to make peace between the other two.

4. The servant approaches the parent, and agrees with his/her point of view.

5 See Andrews 1991, essay no. 4 in this present volume.

5. The servant approaches the child, and agrees with his/her point of view.

6. The servant announces that the two are now reconciled – although the audience knows that neither has changed his/her mind.

7. Parent and child are delighted – but they soon discover that nothing has changed, and start quarrelling again.

A team of three *commedia dell'arte* actors would just have to remember those seven units, and keep them in the correct order: the dialogue would be built spontaneously from the professional memory-bank, with reference to dozens of other similar scenes performed in the past. This would be made all the easier by the fact that the disagreement between parent and child relates to the very predictable subject for a comedy of this sort, namely whom the child is going to marry – a subject on which the professionals would have delivered countless quarrelsome dialogues in other plays.

I found this structure first of all in a play by Virgilio Verucci called *Li Diversi Linguaggi*, first published in Venice in 1609.[6] Verucci belongs to a group of dramatists who wrote in a genre now referred to as *'Commedia Ridicolosa'* (Mariti 1978):[7] fully scripted plays, for performance by amateurs, but drawing heavily on the masks, scenarios and observed techniques of the *commedia dell'arte*. In this case the characters concerned are Pantalone, his daughter Virginia, and the servant Zanni. But my outline of the seven units of action may more readily have been recognised by readers of Molière. Exactly the same sequence of events is followed in act 4 of *L'Avare*, where the three characters are Harpagon, his son Cléante, and the servant Maître Jacques. Moreover, both *Li Diversi Linguaggi* and *L'Avare* have one major element of their story in common: the conventional expedient (dating in fact from Ariosto's *I suppositi*, 1509) whereby a lover takes a position as a servant in the household of the girl he wants to marry, and tries

6 The publisher in 1609 was Vecchi. The play was then reprinted once more in 1627.

7 The volume contains a detailed study of the genre and the texts of five comedies. A full text of Verucci's *Li diversi linguaggi* (1627 version) appears on 107-206.

to win the favour of her father – the father being Pantalone in one case, and Harpagon in the other. This reinforces my view that in Molière (though perhaps not in Shakespeare) it was 'product', as well as 'process', which was borrowed or transferred from *commedia dell'arte.* And, as in the case of Lodovico Dolce and Shakespeare, there is no need for us to argue that Molière had read the text of Verucci's play, or another play derived from it. It is better to say that both dramatists were drawing in different ways on a single accumulated body of material which was known to all professional actors. The methods used, once again, are those of oral transmission: the techniques which this involves have been studied independently by a number of scholars, to whom Fitzpatrick makes detailed reference in his recent book.

The repetitive, almost ritual, character of the 'elastic gag' makes it an easy device for actors to use in improvisation. It is essentially a theatrical structure, rather than a literary one: it produces texts which are boring to read, and which seem on the page to have little creativity. However, Molière must have discovered, through long experience, that repetitive alternation functioned well for an audience. As I have suggested, it made them laugh more often at events which were not intrinsically amusing. Arguably, also, that very element of repetition served the function of ensuring that the comic message was fully received by the audience – it gave the public time to absorb and understand what was happening. The examples which we have quoted so far are from farcical scenes, which do not use their comedy to communicate any subtle psychological or moral messages. However, there are in Molière some famous scenes of what the English call 'high comedy' which are composed around the same elastic structure. The repetition of *"Le pauvre homme!"* (Poor fellow!) in *Tartuffe* (1.4) is an elastic gag which expresses the comic obsession of the character Orgon. It is important to recognise that although the psychological picture which it conveys is a plausible one, the method by which it is conveyed is thoroughly artificial, and has its roots in the theatrical techniques which I have been discussing, rather than in real behaviour. The same is true, in 5.3 of the same play, of Madame Pernelle's repeated refusal to believe what she is told by her son; and in *Le Misanthrope*, 2.4, of Alceste's repetitions of *"Je ne dis*

pas cela . . ." (I'm not saying *that* . . .) as he tries to avoid openly criticising the sonnet composed by his friend Oronte. The ritual dramatic structure cannot in any sense be called 'realistic'; but its stylisation helps to communicate very real patterns of human mentality and behaviour, and to create indelible comic images of obsession, obstinacy, and evasion.

Part of Molière's genius was to recognise how this banal repetitive structure, based on the everyday craftsmanship of improvising actors, could be used for a more penetrating and thoughtful type of comedy. Those scenes are composed perfectly, and one would not want to see them made longer or shorter. As in the case of our opening example from Shakespeare, the dramatist has taken control of a particular dramaturgical structure. However, we can see this structure as having its origins in a different form of theatre process, where improvising actors play variations on a large (but not infinite) repertoire, and where their spontaneous virtuosity is an important part – perhaps the most important part – of the experience which the audience enjoys.

If we accept this thesis, then our subsequent reading of drama, and particularly of comic drama, of the 17th and 18th centuries can be transformed. We can see how *commedia dell'arte* techniques helped to form the shape even of that stage comedy which we normally subject to more literary analysis. We can learn to identify units of the professional improvising repertoire in written comic scripts. Those units will not only consist of the 'elastic gag' structure which I have been discussing here – though the presence in a play script of scenes built on repetition, accumulation and delay are often a first indication that an analysis of this sort is appropriate. Our analysis should be broadened to cover monologue as well as dialogue – it is clear, from all our sources of information, that for masks such as the Doctor, the Captain and the lovers the single long speech or tirade was an important part of their virtuoso repertoire. We need to find more criteria by which we can identify elements in that monologue repertoire – criteria in which the characteristics of the elastic, repetitive scene may play little part.[8]

8 I have since surveyed a broader range of dramaturgical devices which derive from improvisation in Chapter 19 of my monograph (Andrews 2022).

At all events, I hope that these suggestions will show that the study of popular European theatre between the 16th and 18th centuries, and of *commedia dell'arte* in particular, has a part to play in a more general thesis about comic drama of all kinds.

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12

Shakespeare and Italian Comedy

It is a commonplace that many of Shakespeare's plots are "Italian stories on the stage".[1] Some of those stories do appear in Italian dramatic works of the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries; but the original or translated sources which were most available, and which Shakespeare is hypothesised as having used, are often texts for reading rather than for performing. It is also the case that, although Italian renderings of certain plots may have been the most accessible versions, the tales themselves often belong to much wider narrative traditions stemming from Europe, the Mediterranean, or beyond. Moreover, some 'Italian' plot formulae had already been adopted and transmuted by other European writers before they reached Shakespeare, who no doubt was supremely indifferent in any case to exact definitions of their origin. (An example is Montemayor's *Diana*, the Spanish pastoral romance of 1559: its central intrigues may have contributed directly to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and to *Twelfth Night*, but Leo Salingar among others would trace them back in their turn to the anonymous Sienese play *Gl'ingannati* of 1532).[2]

All researches and critical arguments on such questions are ultimately concerned with units of fiction, or narremes – the things which Shakespeare chooses to make happen in the stories which he dramatises – and perhaps also with the motivation of his characters. On these subjects the analyses which we pursue, and the judgements which we make, do not often differ materially whether we are dealing with prose or verse narrative on the one hand, or with

1 This phrase is the title of Louise George Clubb's contribution in Leggatt 2002, 32-46.

2 See Salingar 1974, 188. Salingar's chapter 5 on 'Shakespeare and Italian Comedy' is still an essential contribution to the topic.

drama on the other. What tends then to be left out of the equation, in a pursuit of Shakespeare's 'Italian sources', is his relationship specifically to Italian *theatrical* practice. It is one thing to identify stories as fictional events: it is another thing to investigate those methods of presentation of stories and of characters which are peculiar to a text composed for the stage. In this Arden Shakespeare volume, the contribution by Stuart Gillespie deals principally with the sources of Shakespeare's narrative material and of the attitudes or ideas which accompanied it. My present essay attempts instead to focus exclusively on the ways in which this supreme English dramatist reflects, or does not reflect, techniques belonging to the most important and seminal body of non-English dramaturgy which existed in his time. Questions of plot material and characterisation cannot be entirely separated from such an inquiry; but the aim is to avoid dwelling here on any Italian texts or practices not intended for stage performance.

We are not going to argue that Shakespeare (or any other Elizabethan or Jacobean dramatist) looked exclusively to the Italian material and techniques which we shall now describe, or was a simple offshoot from them. There are too many other proven influences on English theatre, often originating from closer to home, to make such an argument tenable; and we cannot fail to acknowledge at every turn the extent to which Shakespeare's personal talent subverts, transforms and transcends any format derived from elsewhere. But an awareness of how Italian innovations had set new standards for European theatre must have existed in England as well as everywhere else. Printed editions of plays and of dramatic theory from Italy were easily available: some of the plays are known to have been translated or adapted, and knowledge of the theory is indisputable in writers such as Sir Philip Sydney and Ben Jonson. In addition we should take much more account than some scholars have been willing to do of an inevitable oral transmission of dramatic ideas within the theatre profession – even if, by definition, the details of such transactions are untraceable in surviving records. Actors in the early modern period were nomadic by nature, and copying or adapting one another's material, even across linguistic divides, was a way of life for them. The greatest amount of promiscuity in this regard occurred between Italy and France; but it is difficult to deny

that for the English theatre too Italian drama was simply *there*, to be noted, half-remembered, sometimes copied, sometimes deliberately resisted. Shakespeare made use of it when he chose – consciously or not, and more in some plays than in others. Its nature needs to be properly delineated and understood, placed alongside all the other influences, and then given neither more nor less than its due weight. However, because of some misconceptions which are still current, the delineation must first be done with some care.

***

Italian Renaissance drama was born in the court and the schoolroom, under the banner of what we now call 'Humanism', or the 'classical revival'. Scholars and gentlemen in the various Italian states insisted dogmatically that, in the new cultural world which they were creating for society's élite, ancient Greek and Roman models should be followed and medieval ones obliterated. All the drama of the recent past was seen as totally lacking in cultural and (just as importantly) social prestige.

This Italian revolution had a fundamental effect on performed art in western culture and civilisation, setting in motion a series of major transformations in terms of how theatre was conceived and managed. These affected not only the structure and content of plays; not only the social, physical and economic organisation of theatres and theatre performances; but also (as is less often recognised) the whole cultural status of theatre and of playwriting. In the medieval period, the production of play texts had been seen as an ephemeral and occasional activity: if scripts were preserved (as was the case with civic collections of mystery plays), then their authorship was both collective and unimportant and their value purely local. But the humanists had inherited from Greece and Rome texts of stage comedy and tragedy which had been preserved and studied for centuries, and which had been appreciated in antiquity on the same level as the greatest epic poetry. They wished now, as part of their campaign to re-acquire classical styles and values, to bestow Authorship, and hence Authority, on correctly composed dramatic compositions; and hence to grant them the new immortality of publication in printed form. Regular printing of new Italian plays in

the classical style was established without controversy, as much as a century before Ben Jonson was derided in England for publishing his dramatic *Workes* in 1616.[3] Jonson was an open and enthusiastic proponent of Italian principles in drama, including the principle of authorial immortality. The evidence suggests that Shakespeare himself was less systematically interested in publication – or else his company was more concerned to keep commercial control of his texts, rather than release versions which could then be performed by others. But the existence of millions of critical words composed on Shakespeare over four hundred years, including this present volume, shows that the Jonsonian, and hence the Italian, view has prevailed. We now accept without question that dramatic literature is an integral part of 'culture' in its highest sense, and that dramatists should be considered as Authors. Heminge and Condell presumably thought the same, when they put together the First Folio.

The humanist vision had a radical effect on the composition of Italian plays, which was transmitted in greater or less degree to the rest of Europe. It established (spuriously, as it happens) a five-act structure as canonical; and introduced sharply delineated genres of comedy and tragedy, which were defined as much in terms of the social class of their main characters as by tone and content. (According to allegedly classical precept, kings and shepherds were not supposed to appear in the same play: scholars' knowledge of Seneca was apparently more accurate than their knowledge of Sophocles).

Comedy, dealing with the urban middle class and its servants or hangers-on, was decisively the first genre to be attempted. Ariosto's first two full-length comedies were performed in 1508 (*La cassaria*) and 1509 (*I suppositi*).[4] They were acted and then printed in prose, an unheard-of innovation in itself. Ariosto himself did not approve

3 Ariosto's *La cassaria* and *I suppositi* were printed (admittedly without the author's permission) c.1510, not long after their first performances. In 1521, the publication of Bibbiena's *Calandra* (perf. 1513) and Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (perf. c.1518) clearly indicated the new status which drama was acquiring. The first retrospective anthology of Italian play texts (by the Florentine Giovan Maria Cecchi) appeared in 1550.

4 For a detailed account of the rise and development of Italian comedy, see Andrews 1993 and Andrews 1996, 277-98.

of dramas in prose, but had at this initial stage to accept the clear preference of his ducal patrons in Ferrara. Most (though not all) Italian dramatists continued to use prose for comedy; and George Gascoigne's *Supposes* of 1566, a translation of *I suppositi*, was then the first prose playtext in English. In other respects, the new Italian comedy was based initially on the models of Plautus and Terence, with early plot contributions from scurrilous medieval *novella*, particularly from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c.1350). The introduction of romance motifs, and particularly of heroines with an extended presence on stage, is attributable almost entirely to comedies from Siena; and it took some time for other Italian dramatists to follow the same trend.

Non-comic drama continued to be written in verse. There is absolutely no equivalent in Italy of the history play (and therefore little to be said here about Shakespeare's histories, apart from the plainly comic scenes involving Falstaff). The imitation of classical tragedy was approached cautiously, in print rather than on the stage, until the production of Giraldi's *Orbecche*, in Ferrara once again, in 1541. The introduction of 'regular' pastoral plays in five acts, which dates from 1545[5] and also began in Ferrara, was a more innovative step, because such compositions had no proper classical antecedents, and the genre soon became partially identified with 'tragicomedy', also a controversial concept.[6] From then on, although all theoretical discussions of dramaturgy had to claim dutifully to be following Aristotle and Horace, there was tension between the desire simply to resurrect an antique form of theatre and the need to create a modern one. In fact, from the 1540s on, theoretical debate was plentiful and energetic in Italy, alongside the writing and performing of plays. Eventually the Italians inflicted dramatic theory with the constraints of the 'three unities' – time, place and action – allegedly derived from Aristotle. These rules were then adopted rigorously in France; but

5 This was the year of the production of Giraldi's 'satyr play' *Egle*. In the event many of *Egle*'s characteristics were not followed up, and the 'regular' pastoral genre was launched more recognisably, still in Ferrara, by Beccari's *Il sacrificio* of 1554-5. See Andrews 1996, 292-8.

6 For a detailed account of how Italian discussions of pastoral tragicomedy affected Shakespeare and English drama, see Henke 1997.

taken with much greater pinches of salt in England and Spain, where there was more continuity with the imaginative and poetic insights of pre-Renaissance drama. (In particular, the convention which insisted on staging plays in the public street, so that scenes could never take place *inside* a domestic dwelling, was a crippling restriction on the development of Italian comedy).

In the first half of the sixteenth century, all this innovative work which heralded and created modern European theatre was written by gentlemen amateur dramatists, and performed by amateur actors in princely courts, in private houses, or on the premises of budding Academies. The middle of the century then saw the rise of professional companies, who (although they accepted princely patronage whenever they could) had to tour round the various Italian centres, and rely for survival on commercial appeal to a paying public. One of their most important strategies was a method of constructing a dramatic spectacle which dispensed with the services of a dramatist. Actors trained themselves in specialist roles: they "learned their part" over a whole career by accumulating and memorising suitable speeches and by soaking themselves in a linguistic and stylistic idiom which was appropriate to their more or less fixed character. Their repertoire was then deployed within three-act scenarios, whose surviving texts summarise what had to happen in the play, scene by scene, but do not reproduce any of the words to be spoken. This technique was most easily applied to comic scripts, though pastoral, tragicomic, and mixed genres were also acted by the new professionals – it is still believed, though not with total certainty, that the Compagnia dei Gelosi premiered Tasso's internationally celebrated pastoral *Aminta*, in Ferrara (yet again) in 1573. In that case, of course, they would have stuck to a carefully composed script. But the use of improvisation was striking, as was the growth of fixed roles, and the tendency for the more comic figures (*parti ridicole*) to wear facial masks as well as immediately recognisable stylised costumes. What was generally characterised just as 'Italian comedy' has now come to be known as *commedia dell'arte*, although there is no evidence for this term until Goldoni used it in 1750.

Considerable misunderstandings still linger regarding the nature of Italian improvised theatre, especially in its golden period

from c.1570 to 1630, and consequently also regarding its possible influence on English dramatists.[7] It has often been assumed that there was an unbridgeable gap between professional improvised theatre and written 'literary' drama in the period; that the theatre of *commedia dell'arte* was more physical than verbal; and that the undoubted input of elements from folklore and carnival produced spectacles which were always populist, knockabout and farcical – "a jocose pantomime", as Frank Kermode puts it in a thoughtful and lucid discussion which is nevertheless based as we shall see on some factual misconceptions.[8] More recent Italian scholarship has undermined these assumptions. The material which the *arte* actors collected in their commonplace books (*zibaldoni*) for recycling into improvised spectacle was heavily literary both in derivation and in character. The scenarios themselves were also recycled permutations of plot elements and scenes filched from written plays; and it was not long before there was a two-way traffic, often impossible for us now to unscramble, between the 'literary' amateurs and the 'theatrical' professionals. (Part of our difficulty in tracing these exchanges comes from the fact that they involved an overlap between oral and literate transmission of cultural ideas and artefacts).[9] *Arte* practitioners such as Cecchini, Scala, and the Andreini family published fully scripted plays, and tried in print to assess the relative merits and status of the two methods of constructing a dramatic spectacle. The preparation of a professional actor was concentrated most of all on learning *words*, and the comic roles were characterised principally by their verbal styles and dialects, however much contribution was also made by gesture, slapstick and music. And although there was a statistical predominance of comic spectacle, Italian comedy itself had absorbed a greater mixture of tones during the second half of the sixteenth century, seeking greater moral solidity in what has been

7 Anglophone readers should not allow themselves to form a view of the phenomenon without first reading two essays in particular: Clubb 1989, 249-80 and Anderson 1995, 189-99. See also Henke 2002; Richards 1990. See now also Andrews 2019.

8 See Kermode 1980.

9 For some overdue exploration of this point, see Fitzpatrick 1995; and Henke 2002.

characterised as *commedia grave* and greater emotional penetration by merging comic elements with the pastoral genre.[10]

This broader tendency to present the rhetorical, the sentimental, and even the tragic was reinforced by another revolutionary phenomenon which the Italians introduced to western performing art – the rise and the acceptance of the actress. It was the *arte* professionals who created the female stage star, in the teeth of formidable opposition from social and religious prejudice. Women were starring in, and even directing, touring companies by the year 1567. The great *dive* such as Isabella Andreini (d. 1604) gained their reputation from a wide range of improvisatory talents, which included the comic and the relatively scurrilous but also covered big emotional moments such as laments, mad scenes, and the ability to improvise verse and song. (Some of them, such as Isabella's daughter-in-law Virginia, also took roles, and sang passionate arias, in the emerging genre of opera). English theatre, determinedly all-male, had an uneasy awareness of what was going on in Italy which scholars are only now beginning to revisit and explore.[11]

The implications of all this are that Italian drama, before and during Shakespeare's career, showed an unbroken continuum between composed 'literary' texts and the repertoire of improvisation; and also more overlap than has sometimes been supposed between different dramatic genres, most particularly between comedy and pastoral. Louise George Clubb writes of "a consanguinity of common aims and repertories of movable parts", embracing "commercial companies everywhere with the learned and courtly drama" (1989, 256). Italian tragedy, which was most heavily based on imitation of classical texts, perhaps stood slightly apart. But all other genres, whether written or improvised, shared one identifiable dramaturgical tendency. Humanist playwrights as well as opportunistic actor-managers composed plays out of

10 For an account of all these tendencies, see Clubb 1989.

11 Frances Barasch surveys the careers of Italian actresses contemporary with Shakespeare in her 2000, 17-21, and 2001, 5-9. Pamela Allen Brown (2021) now argues that English dramaturgy and performance was heavily affected by the existence of Italian actresses.

pre-existing units of plot and character, what Clubb has called "theatergrams".[12] That professional scenarios should be constructed in this way is obvious and understandable, granted that they were produced in considerable haste. But there is evidence that more thoughtful dramatists were inclined to adopt the same approach. In 1561 Alessandro Piccolomini – a Sienese aristocrat, churchman, and academic dramatist with time on his hands – explained in a letter to a friend how he had a project to collect together examples of social and psychological types who could be represented on stage, to attribute suitable speeches and paired-off dialogues to them, and thus to assemble what we would now call a data-bank of re-usable scenes for future dramatists:

> avevo proposto di fare in ciascun di questi accoppiamenti diverse scene; avendo insieme l'occhio al decoro . . . acciocché si potessono applicare a diverse favole, con levar solo o aggiugnere qualche cosetta . . . [13]
>
> [I had planned to create various scenes for each of these couples, having an eye always to verisimilitude . . . so that they could be applied to many different stories, with just small additions and omissions . . .]

The gentleman scholar Piccolomini was attempting to identify irreducible units of dramatisable behaviour, based on a generalising view of the permanent qualities of human nature. For the professional actor, and for the *capocomico* constructing a scenario at high speed, the same concepts became items of repertoire, to be memorised, adapted, and recycled into any dramatic context which they would fit. Italian dramaturgy makes very frequent use of such movable units; and this was a characteristic shared equally by scripted and improvised theatre. The 'units' concerned could provide structures for individual scenes, but also for whole plots. Italian dramaturgy, scripted and improvised, tended towards a 'modular' structure. As a result, it would be possible now, in retrospect, to identify a limited number of typical Italian plots,

12 The concept is explained in the 'Prologue' to Clubb, 1989, 1 26.

13 Dedicatory letter in Piccolomini 1561; quoted in Seragnoli 1980, 99. For a longer translated extract, see Andrews 1993, 105-6.

which were subject to endless variations of detail. Here are just three examples, which we might find relevant:

> (A) A pair, or two pairs, of young lovers find their desire to marry impeded by one or both of their respective fathers. The young triumph, and the old are defeated, either by trickery or by the revelation of true identities and family relationships. Meanwhile, the unsuitable desires of older or more ridiculous characters (a soldier, a pedant, and/or one of the old fathers) are frustrated by tricks played on them, often by inducing them to adopt a humiliating disguise. Low-life servant characters figure, either effectively or ineffectively, in both levels of intrigue.
>
> (B) In a vague or mythical Arcadia, various young shepherds are in love with one another in patterns which do not allow them to pair off comfortably. (Some of the young maidens may be rejecting the idea of love as a matter of principle). The pairings are achieved by means and events which induce a change of heart in one or more of the characters: these may or may not involve intervention from a supernatural figure. Emotional attitudes are meticulously expressed, at all stages, in poetic and rhetorical speeches.
>
> (C) An isolated island is ruled by a magician, whose power within his territory is limitless. A range of characters find themselves on the island, against their will – they include lovers and others from gentlemanly classes, and more ridiculous masked figures from improvised comedy. By the end of their encounters with each other and with the magician, reconciliations both sentimental and comic, and some form of self-discovery for some characters, have been achieved: these solutions may involve the magician himself, in relation to his past life.

The point about such formulae is that they belong specifically to no individual play, but generically to many: they are theatergrams *frequently and regularly repeated* in Italy, *both in scripts and scenarios.* Their possible relevance to Shakespeare is immediately apparent. Scenario (A) contains the events most often recycled in Italian comedy; and it shows that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (perhaps suprisingly) is in plot terms Shakespeare's most 'Italianate' play.[14] *A*

14 This has been fully noted by Salingar 1974, 190, 228-38; though it is less

Midsummer Night's Dream appears as a conflation of Scenarios (A) and (B); while the relevance of Scenario (C) to *The Tempest* seems indisputable.

It is the case of *The Tempest* which points up most clearly some of the theoretical principles involved.[15] Kermode's considerable reluctance to include *commedia dell'arte* as an influence on the play stems from a desire to identify single individually persuasive source texts; and from a habit of distinguishing firm 'sources' from mere "analogues and pseudo-sources (1954, 66-70)". He notes that the specific scenarios cited in evidence by Neri and Lea are of disputable date, and may have been drafted later than *The Tempest*.[16] He is also hampered by his inherited view of improvised theatre as being a totally separate genre concentrating on popular farce ('jocose pantomime'). What can now be argued is that the surviving evidence is cumulative, and stems from a large tradition of both scripted and improvised drama which offers many different levels of jocosity or seriousness. Whether certain specific surviving texts date from before or after 1612 is irrelevant – they are single representatives of a repeated tendency in the longer term. To put the matter another way, an accumulation of 'analogues' can arguably take on the character of a 'source'; particularly in a theatrical culture where performance ideas were constantly being transmitted orally and by direct experience from one practitioner to another. The intertextuality of theatre culture, especially in this early modern period in Europe, cannot be traced only in relation to material which was set down on paper, and which happens to have survived. *The Tempest* does not resemble just a couple of late scenarios, but a repeated Italian 'repertoire plot', which coalesced out of a mingling of comedy, pastoral and romance.

The repertoire of Italian theatergrams operated also on a smaller scale, affecting both the content and the structure of individual scenes and dialogues. Stock roles (lovers, fathers, Captains, servants, named masks such as Zani and Pantalone) possessed

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often recognised by individual editions and studies of the play.

15 For what now follows, see in greater detail Andrews 2014 in the present volume.

16 See Neri 1913; Kathleen Lea 1934, vol. 1, 201-3 and vol. 2, 444, 509.

stock speeches, both monologues and diatribes directed at other characters. (An obvious example of the latter is a homily delivered by a father to a son – Polonius to Laertes). For improvising actors working without a dramatist, these were essential equipment in their repertoire, but written scripts incorporate them too. Improvising technique also made much use of what have been described as 'elastic' or open-ended sequences, in which back-and-forth repetition could be prolonged or curtailed at will until a pre-arranged punch line, or interruption, brought it to an end.[17] This technique could apply to comic gags of suspense and frustration, in which the anticipated outcome or statement was held off for as long as possible (Zani deciding whether to open the door; the revelation that father and son are pursuing the same woman). But it could also be used for open-ended sequences such as the recital of lists, or the commented reading of documents; or for more sophisticated emotional material. Two lovers could compete with one another with affecting rhetorical tropes; or in offering mythical or literary parallels for their current state of mind – like Lorenzo and Jessica capping one another's examples of legendary lovers who sought each other "on such a night as this".[18] In an improvised scenario, probably a third character would need to interrupt them before they ran out of material: where there is a dramatist, he can make his own decision about how the sequence concludes. In this 'elastic' kind of structure, an element of mirror-imaging or echoing is common, because whoever speaks or acts second can take the tone, rhythm or style from the item which came first.

The fact that these modular blocks of material, and characteristic patterns of dialogue, may have originated in improvisation technique was no bar to their adoption by literary dramatists, who recognised their stage effectiveness and included them in written scripts. They appear plentifully in certain seventeenth-century Italian plays which aim to mimic the improvising professionals as closely as possible;[19] and they are central to the dramaturgy of

17 See Andrews 1991, essay no. 4 in the present volume.

18 For more on this sequence, see Andrews 1998, essay no. 11 in the present volume.

19 This body of material, already recognised as relevant by Lea in 1934

Molière, who had Italian models before him throughout his career.[20] For Shakespeare, by comparison, this methodology and the material that went with it were no doubt a more distant resource, which he could choose to exploit or to ignore. An examination of his comic writing in particular shows that he did both, in different ways and on different occasions.

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We have proposed not to linger over the 'stories' recounted by Shakespeare, accepting that in a great number of cases these were taken from non-dramatic sources. Most exceptions to this statement are well recognised and can be quickly listed. The sub-plot of *The Taming of the Shrew* (Bianca, Lucentio, and the pretended father) is taken directly from Ariosto's *I suppositi* via Gascoigne's *Supposes*. The tangle of misdirected lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a generic idea inspired by numerous plots in Italian pastoral drama; and the 'chain' of Silvio-Phebe-Ganymede/Rosalind-Orlando in *As You Like It* is another version. The tricks of induced disguise and humiliation played on Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* are entirely Italianate: the *topos* first appears textually in Piccolomini's *Alessandro* of 1545, and is endlessly repeated in scenarios where the victim is usually Pantalone or a Capitano. In this context, it has been suggested more than once that the plot of *Othello* is a parody of an Italian comedy format, with Iago presenting himself for the audience's collusion as a Zani figure playing an aggressive trick on a kind of braggart soldier. *Romeo and Juliet*, with its clash between children and parents and its heroine's bawdy nurse, is easily seen as a standard Italian comic story which happens to end badly.[21]

Helena's disguise as a female pilgrim in *All's Well* might come directly from Bargagli's *La Pellegrina*, composed in the 1560s and eventually performed at the Florentine granducal wedding of 1589. Imogen in *Cymbeline* reflects tales about falsely accused virtuous

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(vol. 2, 464-71), has been arbitrarily designated "commedia ridicolosa" by Italian critics. See Mariti 1978.

20 See Andrews 1985, 141-76, and 1998.

21 Clubb 1989, draws attention more than once to these tragic subversions of comic formulae (9-12, 18, 23-5, etc).

wives forced to wander in male disguise: a theme which recurs frequently in non-dramatic narrative, but which also has an Italian stage tradition, in plays both Humanist and pre-Humanist from the city of Siena.[22] Then there are other women as yet unmarried who take on male identity while pursuing their lovers – Julia, Viola, Rosalind. They are repeating a device often used in Italian comedies and scenarios, partly as an excuse to get heroines out of their domestic purdah (which reflects Italian social realities) and on to the street which is the stage. Most frequently discussed have been the links between *Twelfth Night* and the important Sienese play *Gl'ingannati*, composed collectively by the Accademia degli Intronati and performed in 1532.[23] The relationships between Orsino, Viola ('Cesario'), Sebastian and Olivia reproduce exactly the ones in that earlier play between Flamminio, Lelia ('Fabio'), Fabrizio and Isabella. In many other cases, Shakespeare uses Italian settings, Italian names for his characters, and sometimes (as in *Much Ado*) a pronounced Italian cultural atmosphere; but the stories actually told do not come straight from Italian stage plays.

A comparison between *Gl'ingannati* and *Twelfth Night* can draw attention to some important ways in which Shakespeare sometimes diverges from Italian theatre formulae, whereas in other cases he follows them more closely. Both the heroines of *Gl'ingannati* are natives of Modena, where the action takes place: they both face the demands of family honour and the authority of their respective fathers, who are major (largely comic) participants in the plot. Isabella lives at home; Lelia is running around disguised in a city where she might at any moment meet her father; and her twin brother Fabrizio, believed lost, returns home unexpectedly to seek his family. Only Flamminio is a totally free agent. In his version of the story, Shakespeare chooses to release all four lovers from any such constraints. Viola and Sebastian are far from home, Olivia is her own mistress, and Orsino is actually the Prince of Illyria. They have no one to think about but themselves, and one another.

22 The subject is fully explored by Clubb and Black 1993, in their edition of the early play *Parthenio* (1520).

23 "1531, Sienese style", in that their years started and ended in March. This explains the date often given in older editions and studies.

This complete liberation from parental pressure is an extremely un-Italian tendency; and Shakespeare seeks it in other ways in some other comedies. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the parents of Julia are mentioned but effectively discarded by the dramatist, and her male disguise is negotiated merely with a servant. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the lovers are young independent aristocrats, though the death of a distant father unexpectedly curtails their self-regarding games. Bassanio and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* have no parents living (though Portia is following her dead father's instructions); nor do any characters in *Measure for Measure*. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It,* the young fledglings are separated in different ways from the parental nest, and return to it with their destinies already settled. In terms of genre, both of these latter flights involve a move from the city, which in Italian terms is the setting for comedy, to the less socialised wilderness which is proper to pastoral. In Italy, in fact, only the pastoral genre normally permitted stage lovers to pursue their self-discoveries outside a parental framework. (It did not always happen even in Arcadia – the most influential pastoral text of all, Guarini's *Il pastor fido*, is dominated by the oppressive presence of patriarchs). In this respect, the Italian tendency in comedy was more socially realistic: escape from the family, at that point in European history, was strictly a romantic fantasy. Since Shakespeare's comedies of unfettered lovers include some of his most popular ones, there is a temptation to regard them as thoroughly typical of his plotting; but one needs to remember that *The Shrew, Two Gentlemen* (as regards Silvia), *The Merchant* (as regards Jessica), *Much Ado*, *Cymbeline*, *Pericles,* and *The Tempest* all involve relations between parents and children; as of course does *Romeo and Juliet*, emphasising its links with comic plot formats. In *A Winter's Tale* the bucolic world inhabited by Perdita does not escape generational conflict. *Much Ado About Nothing*, in particular, has in the figure of Leonato an absolutely typical Italian stage father, trapped in the rules of Mediterranean family honour which entirely dictate his emotions. Like his Italian counterparts, he is obliged to be potentially violent when he is threatened with shame through his daughter, and equally obliged to be gracious and friendly when the misunderstanding is cleared up. This play also typifies the Italian, and Shakespearean, tendency for lovers to have one parent on stage

rather than two (Hero's mother Innogen having been written out on second thoughts), and for that one usually to be a father (pace Bertram in *All's Well*). In this respect, the two full sets of parents in *The Merry Wives* are a remarkable exception for comedy.

The case of *Twelfth Night* also introduces observations about the treatment of heroines in comedy, and about female characters in general. In 1532 *Gl'ingannati* broke the previous mould of Italian *commedia erudita* in giving its heroine Lelia considerable stage time in which to explain her emotions to the audience; and in constantly allowing women, including servants, to control the plot and get the better of men. Up to then, the new comic drama had followed Plautus and Terence in treating women as the prizes for which men contended, but either keeping them off stage altogether or treating them patronisingly when they were on; and the relative feminism introduced by the Sienese was not followed by other Italian dramatists for some time (Andrews 1997, 11-31). Lelia is allowed to take initiative in the intrigue, with her decision to adopt male disguise and actively to sabotage Flamminio's courtship of Isabella; though eventually she retreats in despair, and Flamminio is induced to love her once again by the astute persuasions of her nurse. In Shakespeare, Viola's version of Lelia's predicament – her entrapment between Orsino and Olivia – is not represented as a situation of her own choosing; and, rather than playing dishonourable tricks, she adopts the virtue of patience in adversity and leaves the untangling to Time.[24] This more 'feminine' passivity had been celebrated frequently in Italian *commedia grave*, in the second half of the sixteenth century, in a Counter-Reformation context which urged a faith in the workings of Providence.[25] Shakespeare in fact fluctuates enormously in the amount of scope and control he gives to his women characters in comedy, and in the amount of extra wisdom and emotional insight which they possess as opposed to the men. Portia and Rosalind are memorable models of female supremacy on both counts, and they are joined by the women of *Love's Labour's Lost* and of *Two Gentlemen*, by

24 For a full analysis of the contrast between these two plays, see Salingar 1974, 211-8 and 239-42. Also Melzi 1966, 67-81.

25 See Clubb 1989, 55-63; and 65-89.

Helena in *All's Well*, and by the eponymous *Merry Wives*. Imogen in *Cymbeline* takes some initiative, but could still be seen as one of the the patient suffering heroines of *commedia grave*. Women come off much worse, however, or are at least more subordinate, in many other plays – *The Taming of the Shrew* is not an isolated exception. In *The Comedy of Errors* wifely jealousy is castigated (though admittedly by an older female character). Titania in the *Dream* is soundly gulled by Oberon, and the female lovers in that play are no more sensible or in control than the men. In *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* daughters have to defer to fathers. Beatrice in *Much Ado* is full of wit, but cannot intervene in events except by begging Benedick to act for her, and she is the victim rather than the perpetrator of the main comic deception. The most complex examples of the treatment of 'female status' are *Measure for Measure*, where women are ambiguously balanced between initiative and subjection; and *Twelfth Night* itself, which contains deliberately contrasting speeches about the emotional fidelity of the male and female sexes. (Viola speaks of female "frailty" in 2.2; Orsino of male "fancies . . . giddy and unfirm" two scenes later).

The attention and imaginative care which Shakespeare devotes to his women removes him very far from what most Italian dramatists achieved in written comedy. If he was learning from anywhere other than from his own insights and genius, then his models could have been Italian pastoral and tragedy (both much more attentive to heroines and to female psychology), or native English precedents such as the plays of Lyly. The greater rhetorical and emotional range brought to Italian theatre by the rise of actresses may have had some indirect influence on the content of English dramatic texts (as is now firmly claimed to be the case by Pamela Allen Brown). However, the clear opposition of English professional actors to accepting women on stage makes this an intricate question. A wider issue, of which the question of female roles is only a part, is that of the sympathy demanded for comic characters in general. Italian classical comedy began, and continued for some time, with no apparent desire to steer its spectators into empathy for any of the figures on stage. Young lovers had to win the contest with their fathers, because that was the rule of comedy; but the young men are usually blinkered, amoral, or at least confused (rather like Shakespeare's Valentine

and Proteus); and the young women in early plays are hardly characterised at all. Victims of comic aggression and trickery are chosen precisely because no one wants to identify with them, or to have any consideration for their feelings, and their defeat is supposed to provoke nothing but glee. (One can identify even today, in popular Italian formats of comic performance, an almost mystical quest for the perfect sucker, to whom everyone can feel derisively superior). Regular persecution in scenarios of the half-dehumanised masks of Pantalone and the Dottore simply continues the treatment of their earlier equivalents in written drama. In this respect, Ben Jonson is clearly (perhaps consciously) more 'Italian' than Shakespeare, with *Volpone* in particular containing a level of pitiless contempt for practically everybody which goes even beyond Mediterranean models. Shakespeare, by contrast, is notoriously unwilling to deny that even his most unsympathetic victims "have feelings too". Shylock bleeds when he is pricked; the ragging of Malvolio is recognised in the end to have gone slightly too far; and even Parolles, who comes nearest to being totally dismissed, is taken grudgingly into the household of Lafeu as part of a general mood of reconciliation. The most striking example is Falstaff. No Italian dramatist shows anything like the subtlety which could allow a character so contemptible in objective terms, and so thumpingly humiliated in the drama, to creep back into forgiveness and sympathy. Yet we all know that Falstaff manages this, mainly by rueful wit directed against himself, both at the end of *The Merry Wives* and in episodes of *Henry IV*. Comparisons with the normal treatment of Italian braggart Capitani, in both scripts and scenarios, underline the distance which Shakespeare has travelled from such models, if he had them in mind – a journey achieved through a combination of human sensitivity and sheer power of writing. Of the latter, we shall have more to say.

A final point worth making on the subject of plotting relates to the observation of sexual codes. Italian comic *novelle*, at least from Boccaccio's time, deal on a regular basis with illicit sexual liaison. Many of them are about adultery, and lead to completely amoral 'happy endings'. Many others depict young lovers who force their parents to allow them to marry by consummating the relationship in advance and leaving their families no choice. (This resigned

acceptance of a *fait accompli* is reflected in real legal and social practice in Italy, to judge by such studies as have been made of the matter; see Ruggiero 1985). *Commedia erudita* in the sixteenth century made more limited use of adultery stories; though some very famous ones, such as Machiavelli's *Mandragola*, are in that category, and the theme lingers through into some of Flaminio Scala's scenarios published in 1611. Pre-marital sex leading then to marriage was however an utterly standard *topos* in comedy (though not in pastoral) – even in comedies which sought a more romantic or sentimental tone. English drama, including Shakespeare, tended to observe the social decencies, as though this was essential in order to retain audience sympathy for the young lovers concered. In *Gl'ingannati*, both pairs of lovers have made love before the end of the play, and both events are subject to bawdy commentary by witnesses: in *Twelfth Night*, Olivia seizes Sebastian and rushes him to the priest, rather than directly to the bedroom. There are numerous other examples which need not be listed. Shakespeare as an individual dramatist was no doubt seriously interested in the subject of marriage; but he was writing in any case in a society which was unsympathetic to stage fornicators. His two examples of the 'bed-trick' (a very Italianate motif in itself), in *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure,* reinforce the insistence on wedlock. Of the two errant males who find themselves after all in bed with the 'right' woman, Bertram is already married and Angelo ought to be. By contrast, Italian dramatists and narrators were just as likely to use the device to bring about an adultery.

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In the interests of complete coverage we must assess quickly the relationships, often already well known, which exist between Shakespeare's characters and stock figures or masks from the Italian stage. The most ubiquitous such category is that of young people in love, which has been addressed already. Where less sympathetic characters are concerned, Italian comedy both scripted and improvised provided a small traditional set of foolish figures to be mocked by the audience. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, we have in Armado and Moth an apparent braggart Capitano with his

traditionally derisive servant; and a possibly Italianate Pedante/ Dottore[26] in Holofernes. Falstaff is a Capitano too, however subtly developed: he has a cruder version of the same mask alongside him in the form of Pistol. Parolles in *All's Well* has been described accurately as a merger between the Italian figures of the braggart and the parasite.[27] In *The Merry Wives* (where we have seen that the whole plot structure is very close to that of standard Italian comedy), Sir Hugh Evans has many of the verbal characteristics of a Pedante/Dottore, and Dr Caius is another version of the braggart, especially since he possesses the secondary trait of speaking in a heavy foreign accent. (Capitani on the Italian stage were usually Spanish). For *The Taming of the Shrew*, there has been speculation on possible relationships between Petruchio (Italian 'Petruccio') and comic servants like Pedrolino. In fact the greatest similarity might be with the aggressive Scaramuccia or Scaramouche, who was a merger of servant and Capitano masks. Coincidence is more likely here, however, than direct influence: Scaramouche, in the person of Tiberio Fiorilli, really gained his reputation in France, and well after Shakespeare's time.

It is harder to find real equivalents in Shakespeare of the most central and standard figures of *commedia dell'arte*, or their immediate ancestors in *commedia erudita*: the miserly lustful father who became Pantalone, and the servant of peasant origins who became Zani.[28] Ludicrous caricatures of misguided old age do not seem to

26 Although the Pedant in Italian written comedy and the *commedia dell'arte* Dottore are obviously related, it is possible to make some distinction between them. The Dottor Graziano mask spoke Bolognese dialect, and quickly settled into a pattern of speaking reams of nonsense based on distorted malapropisms. Pedants were more obviously pedantic, and larded their speeches with Latin. Both of them were inclined to be long-winded, and to find endless lists of synonyms for simple words.

27 Krapp in 1916, as quoted by Hunter 1959, 47. The parasite figure, borrowed from Roman comedy, was common in the earliest Italian plays which based themselves on classical models, though he faded out later in the century.

28 My omission of the name Arlecchino here is deliberate. Harlequin was a French demon figure, imported into Italian *commedia dell'arte* by the aggressive genius of a single actor, Tristano Martinelli (1557-1630). By the eighteenth century, the mask had been 'naturalised' in Italian theatre as

have interested our author, except for their one devastating tragic transformation in King Lear. Gremio in *The Shrew* is referred to as a 'pantaloon', but otherwise under-characterised. English audiences perhaps preferred to treat stage patriarchs with respect – as indeed was also recommended by the more moralistic Italian theorists of comedy. Prospero, as we have indicated, is an Italianate figure, but a sympathetic one. Subordinate or servant characters are not allowed to control the plot, as happens in so much Italian comedy – except again in tragically subverted mode, in *Othello*. In Shakepeare's clowns we shall be able to point below to some examples of 'elastic' improvisatory technique, but it is hard to see in their characters or verbal style anything which is other than firmly English, or original to their author. The most obvious trait of a Zani – his overwhelming carnivalesque preoccupation with food – is not to be found in any Shakespearean clown, and indiscriminate lust is not common either. Male and female servants are not regularly paired off at the end of comic plots, like Zani and Francheschina. Touchstone and Audrey are an almost parodic exception, like Dromio of Syracuse and his fantastically evoked Nell whom we never see; and Gratiano and Nerissa are dependents but not servants of the lowest class. (In this respect, Shakespeare diverges from Lyly as well as from Italian sources). Bestial lust is found in the equally exceptional figure of Caliban, who in this respect and others derives from the satyr of Italian pastoral.[29]

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In Italian drama, stock characters were associated with stock material. Some items of such material have clear similarities to an Italian antecedent. The two voices in Lancelot Gobbo's head – 'conscience', and 'the fiend' (*Merchant* 2.2) – resemble a device

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an equivalent of the Bergamask peasant Zani, speaking the same dialect; but this process took longer than some historians have acknowledged. Harlequin's dominance in European images of 'Italian comedy' was really forged by a succession of performers in the Comédie Italienne in Paris, between 1650 and 1750.

29 This lineage seems obvious to Italianists, but it has only been fully identified by Henke 1997, 107-19.

found in a monologue by 'Ruzante' (Angelo Beolco) in the *Dialogo Facetissimo* composed around 1529. Falstaff's excuses after Gadshill, where he steadily multiplies the number of men he claims attacked him (*1 Henry* IV, 2.4), are a futile trick tried by the Ruzante character in the *Parlamento* of similar date.[30] A lover's speech in which he justifies his own indignity by comparing himself to prestigious legendary or mythological figures (Armado and Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Falstaff in *The Merry Wives*) was a standard *topos* for Italian Pantaloni, Dottori and Capitani. Where the material itself cannot be seen as derivative, the structure of a comic scene may nevertheless be reminiscent of patterns used by improvising actors, however firmly one may also feel that Shakespeare has stepped in as dramatist to take control of his material. This refers most of all to the open-ended 'elastic' structure, capable of functioning in either lengthened or shortened form, and therefore easy for improvising actors to vary and manipulate. A simple example of this is the scene in *1 Henry* IV (2.4) where the Prince and Poins have Francis chasing backwards and forwards with his "Anon, anon, sir!": the joke really needs to be left in the hands of the actors, who should decide at each performance how long it should be kept (literally) running. And in *Part 2* (5.1), it is surely up to the actor playing Shallow to decide each night how many times he should say "Sir John, you shall not be excused". On a more complex level, Lancelot Gobbo and his father keep interrupting each other in *The Merchant of Venice* (2.2) when asking Bassanio to take Lancelot into his service: if the scene were improvised, it would be up to the actor playing Bassanio to decide when to call them to order and move the scene on. And it is easy to imagine the pseudo-foreign gibberish directed at the blindfolded Parolles (*All's Well*, IV, 1 and 3) as a gag which could be prolonged for much longer than the surviving script records. The most natural form of improvisable scripting is of course simply to leave a space in the text which allows comic actors to insert their own material. Shakespeare, perhaps sharing Hamlet's prejudice against clowns who speak more than is set down for them, very rarely does this. The "Anon, anon" scene just referred to ends, uniquely, in a stage

30 Both these one-act entertainments are edited by Padoan 1981. For Ruzante in general, see Ferguson 2000.

direction ("*Here they both call him . . .*") which gives the actors their head. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Martin Banham has persuasively suggested that Lancelot Gobbo's entrance in 5.1 leaves the clown free to improvise a sequence of night-time confusion before he finds the people he wants to speak to.[31] Those two examples seem to stand alone.

However, elastic structures are not confined to scenes aimed at raising a laugh, as appears in the example of Lorenzo and Jessica already quoted: their formally echoing repetitions of "On such a night . . ." usually attract romantic sympathy, however playful they may also be. The list of suitors passed in review by Portia and Nerissa, in 1.2 of the same play, is also an open-ended pattern (we could have as many or as few suitors as somebody chooses) – and one not unknown in Italian plays which mimic *commedia dell'arte*. This reminds us, importantly, that dramaturgical patterns as such can be as significant as the content which they convey. An attempt to assess possible derivations from the practices of Italian Renaissance theatre must take full account not only of individual pieces of material, but also of the larger compositional and structural tendencies described earlier in this essay. Shakespeare's plays can be read with an eye to identifying the extent to which they assemble 'repertoire' items – units or sections of text which can be seen as movable, re-usable in modular fashion in other plays and contexts. These may be autonomous set speeches, and they may be associated with a single stereotype character: the essence of Portia's speech on mercy could on the face of it come from any Renaissance commonplace book, and Falstaff's discourse on honour could be re-assigned to any braggart soldier. But we can equally be dealing with dialogues or scenes, rather than speeches; and the 'recyclable' character of a sequence can sometimes be inherently apparent, whether or not it has yet been documented as being used in another dramatic text.

31 See Banham 1991, 269-74. The specific gag of a character failing (or pretending to fail) to find someone whom the audience can plainly see can in fact be found in Italian scripts: see Andrews 1998, 18 (essay no. 11 in the present volume).

There are, of course, pitfalls involved in a reading of Shakespeare dedicated exclusively to identifying such movable units of modular dramaturgy. One can end up seeing things which (in other readers' eyes) are not there, or which have alternative explanations. The Renaissance interest in *sententia* and generalisation produced a tendency to fill plays with observations of universal moral interest, which might thus be transferred *from* the playtext *into* commonplace books, rather than vice versa. Such a preoccupation with aphorism, fixed categories, and 'wisdom literature' (which had kept the plays of Terence in the schoolroom throughout the middle ages) perhaps helped to form the methods of Italian dramaturgy, as is shown by the project of the humanist Alessandro Piccolomini; but it could have entered English practice spontaneously and separately. It is no doubt absurd to assume that every single reflective or generalising speech in a play by Shakespeare proves a dependence on Italian theatre. Moreover, where open-ended repetition is concerned, a pattern of reiteration and delay may simply be a mnemonic resource hit upon naturally by all human brains (especially, in the first instance, illiterate or semi-literate ones), and therefore again not culture-specific: there is a technique called "unpacking the parcel", used by clowns in Chinese theatre, which is similar to what is found in Italian sources. Will Kempe may have used his own 'elastic gags' without reference to any foreign influence. Nevertheless, we would argue that this kind of analysis, the hunt for the repertoire number and for overall modular structure, can at the very least turn up observations which are of interest in their own right in characterising Shakespeare's dramaturgy. In some cases, then, the parallels can be extremely striking to those familiar with the Italian material.

Also striking, however, is the degree of variation which appears from one play to another, when they are examined via this particular choice of tunnel vision. At one end of the scale, we could single out *As You Like It*, which presents itself in part as an assemblage of various kinds of set piece, many of which have something in common with Italian antecedents. There is a substantial list of speeches which aim at the status of generalisations or *sententiae*: Duke Senior in 2.1 on the contrast between court and rural life (a subject pursued further by Touchstone and Corin in 3.2); many speeches made by, or about, the character of Adam; Rosalind's

discourse on the different speeds of Time in 3.2, and her reflections on love and lovers in 4.1; and, inevitably, most of the lines given to Jacques. We need not distinguish too sharply between unbroken harangues and those turned into dialogue: a memorised repertoire number in the Italian tradition can often be partially disguised by allowing room for other characters to interrupt it from time to time, but this makes little difference to the actor who memorised it in the first place. Sequences involving Silvius and Phebe are highly redolent of movable repertoire dialogues from Italian pastoral: they culminate in the repetitive echoing scene involving also Orlando and Rosalind/Ganymede ("And so am I for . . ."; 5.2). Here the format is played out to the point of parody, as Rosalind herself recognises in exasperatedly bringing it to an end. Touchstone the jester has a whole series of autonomous routines, resembling just as often the traditional material of a *commedia dell'arte* Dottore as that of a Zani or clown. He overwhelms both Corin and William by deploying a torrent of repetitive synonyms, and by developing ridiculous arbitrary steps of logic to reach a desired conclusion (as in his 'proof' that Corin is damned, in 3.2). His essential difference from Dottor Graziano is that he knows exactly what he is doing, and uses his verbiage ironically as a weapon: Italian (and French) Doctors are merely silly without knowing it. His number about duelling procedures in 5.4 (inserted, in good modular fashion, to cover Rosalind's change of costume) is a mnemonic *tour de force*, in which he challenges himself to repeat all his allegedly improvised nonsense in the proper order – this too was a feature of the Dottore mask, if we are to judge by Molière's Docteur in the early farce *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* (scene 2). Altogether, *As You Like It* represents a distinctly modular approach to playwriting.

At the other end of the scale of comparison comes *Much Ado About Nothing*, which is difficult if not impossible to break down in the same way. This is all the more surprising because the play is so heavily Italianate in other respects: its setting, the derivation of its story-lines, and some of its stock characters (such as Leonato, already discussed). By comparison with *As You Like It, Much Ado* seems entirely void of rhetorical elaboration, and of pauses for generalised comment. The longer and more intense speeches which it does contain, whether monologues or outbursts to other

characters, seem always to be pushed out of those who speak them by sheer pressure of emotion, comic or serious as that may be; so the words and concepts are specific to the character and the situation, difficult to extract and recycle elsewhere. The two eavesdropping scenes, when Benedick and Beatrice are successively deceived about each other, could have invited a set of echoes and mirror-images. No Italian dramatist could have resisted such a temptation, and for improvising actors it would have been a godsend; but Shakespeare seems to have worked quite hard to avoid it, so that although the situational parallel is unmistakable it is not reinforced by detailed verbal patterns. Dogberry could have been conceived as an Italian clown, but he is not: his malapropism is shared both with Zani and Dottori, but his scenes are mostly 'through-composed' rather than repetitive or elastic. The passages of wit between Benedick and Beatrice could be seen in some ways as set pieces, but do not have any of the autonomy or the repetitive features of similar Italian repertoire. In this case (as also in particular with *Love's Labour's Lost*), Shakespeare's long-recognised debt to John Lyly seems more important than any Italian derivation; and Lyly's structures are concentrated and individual, quite unlike the patterns thrown up by Italian modular improvisation.

On the strength of this kind of analysis, *The Merchant of Venice* also comes out as a comedy which assembles a notably high number of movable dramaturgical theatergrams, often with links to material in Italian plays and scenarios. We cannot pretend to mount a firm statistical comparison, in relation to individual elements or units each one of which could be subject to discussion; but on an impressionistic reading other comedies with a 'high modular quotient' would include *The Merry Wives*; *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well* specifically in their comic rather than romantic scenes; and *Measure for Measure* in the restricted sense that it contains a kind of internal debate which produces set speeches on either side. (Where editors of the text see a single speech by the Duke as having perhaps been awkwardly split between 3.2 and 4.1, one could see this as a 'modular' manipulation of pre-conceived material in an attempt to cover a practical stage lacuna; see Lever 1965, 20-2). Comedies which present themselves less in terms of such pre-baked building blocks include *The Comedy of Errors* (perhaps showing that here

Shakespeare was looking directly to Plautus rather than to Italian intermediaries); *Love's Labour's Lost* (where the dramaturgical structure confirms the influence of Lyly); and the later comedies (if that is what they are) *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* (whereas *The Tempest*, as we shall see, is another matter). *The Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are in different ways more complex cases, under this sort of heading, and would each need a separate detailed analysis – here we can only remark in passing on how much the *Dream* both depends on and diverges from the formats of Italian pastoral.

A more ambitious and risky type of analysis would move from considering 'elastic' dialogues and scenes to potentially 'elastic' plots. In *The Merchant of Venice*, there is no limit in theory to the number of suitors who make wrong decisions about Portia's caskets, and who postpone the anticipated triumph of Bassanio. This example perhaps acts as a warning – a reminder that such open-ended delay is common in folk narrative as well as in theatre (and that there is a strong tendency in both cases to fall back on the 'rule of three'). *The Tempest* is a more complex case. We have already alluded to the strong similarities between its overall plot and an Italian format which was very familiar in both written and improvised drama. On the level of scene structure, a number of sequences are capable (if one chooses) of being analysed in relation to improvisation practice: Prospero's long *protasis* narrative (1.2), which has to be rather pedestrianly interrupted by Miranda and by Ariel in order to make some dialogue out of it; Gonzalo's moralising speeches (2. 1), similarly broken up by the mockery of the other lords; Trinculo under Caliban's cloak (2.2), where Stephano's puzzlement could be prolonged, together with the number of times he feeds drink into various orifices; Ariel's invisible repetitions of "Thou liest", which lead to an undeserved beating for Trinculo, in *commedia dell'arte* style. Such items are not unique in Shakespeare, but in this case the analysis could be extended on to a larger scale. Discussions of the play's textual status have sometimes proposed that there are some scenes missing: that in an earlier version both Ferdinand's ordeal of carrying logs and the build-up of Caliban's plot against Prospero

once lasted for longer and involved more episodes.[32] Whether or not this argument is textually tenable, it does highlight the fact that the plot has the potential in theory of being extended in such a manner; this could be taken as another reason for seeing Italianate influences on the structure, as well as the content, of Shakespeare's last play. Like some other features which we have indicated, however, this tendency may be an exception rather than a rule.

This essay has confined itself primarily to considering Shakespeare's comic drama, simply for reasons of space. As has been briefly indicated, it is possible to see some of the tragedies too as containing (always alongside many other elements) some deliberate twists and subversions of theatergrams which began their life in Italy. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *King Lear* can certainly be joined by *Hamlet* in this respect: Polonius and his family are a grimmer version of comedy stereotypes, and the hero himself adopts complex strategies to portray his 'antic disposition', some of which can allude to the personality and routines of the Italian clown. We must conclude, however, by stressing once again how Italian precedents may underly some of Shakespeare's dramaturgical choices, but can never explain them; and how our author regularly transcends the limitations which Italians tended to set (sometimes consciously and deliberately) to their theatrical offerings. Most Shakespeare criticism reveals a level of thematic and verbal complexity which Italian drama never approached. Part of the reason for this may lie precisely in the Italian tendency to construct plays out of pre-existing blocks, which makes it hard to construct an integral play with a unique message without heavy and systematic intervention – by a dramatist who is both sufficiently eclectic and sufficiently single-minded to know exactly what he wants to achieve. When the Italians chose to improvise, their problem was even greater: modern students of drama often love to acclaim and romanticise 'actors' theatre', but it usually takes 'dramatist's theatre' to transfer an original vision to the stage in a coherent manner. When we have argued that Shakespeare used modular dramaturgy, or that some of his scenes and speeches possess a transferable character, this

32 This was the view, among others, of H.D. Gray, as outlined and discussed in Kermode's Introduction (1954, 20-1).

was not intended to imply that any of them was in fact written by someone else. A large aspect of what we call his genius was his ability to take total possession of everything he borrowed, including a range of compositional methods which he perceived would work on stage in different chosen circumstances. In addition, of course, he was a poet in a vigorously developing language, which still possessed much more flexibility than Italian was prepared to allow itself. Where Italian dramatists chose a rhetoric which had already been recognised and approved by their audience, Shakespeare chose poetry, and constantly broke existing moulds.

Italian drama, especially its comedy, had its contrasting merits. Not even a Shakespeare can cover everything which can be done in theatre, and all positive choices involve rejecting some equally positive alternatives. In the end, though, those merits were never fully realised by any playwright or practitioner from Italy itself. That achievement had to wait for Molière, who imposed his own ‘dramatist’s theatre’ on Italian formats but brought less change to their basic character. An interesting exchange is recorded by the actor Anthony Sher about the contrast between the English and French masters: he was conversing with Christopher Hampton, who was the translator of Molière’s *Tartuffe*:

> The problem with Molière’s writing is the deceptive thinness of it. There’s no poetry, no sub-text, just a very basic situation, like sit-com. Chris says, “All there is is what is there, but that happens to be brilliant”. He says the French find Shakespeare difficult for the opposite reason. Why is he so oblique, they cry in Gallic confusion, why doesn’t he just say what he means? (1985, 46)

In Shakespeare’s Italian sources, too, “all there was was what was there”, brilliant or not as it may have been. It was his insistence on meaning more than just what he said which transformed those sources, and all his others, into far more than the sum of their parts.

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13

A Midsummer Night's Dream and Italian Pastoral

Scholars have tended to be cautious about accepting that there might be direct influences from Italian Renaissance drama into the theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The individuality of the English theatre tradition is no doubt responsible for this – in particular its refusal to accept the so-called Aristotelian 'unities', proposed by Italian theorists and then enthusiastically absorbed by French dramatists. It remains the case that modern European theatre, as we still understand it, was born in Italy under the aegis of Humanism; and born, what is more, a good fifty years before it got under way in England. (The first full-length play in the classical mode – which, however paradoxically, was also to become the mode of modern dramaturgy – was Ariosto's *La cassaria*, performed in Ferrara in 1508). From a neutral standpoint, it seems simply implausible that prestigious models so long established could have been effectively quarantined from English theatre, deriving as they did from a culture whose influence was sweeping through every other sector of the nation's artistic life. Efforts are now being made to investigate what influences there might have been, however clandestine and disguised;[1] but mainstream Shakespeare criticism remains slow to accommodate even relatively modest proposals.

With regard to the link proposed in the title of this present essay, there is a dearth of critical literature which accepts that there is any connection at all between Italian pastoral drama and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. From the one side, critical literature on the *Dream* does not normally look for Italian antecedents. This is despite some considered statements which have been made by two American scholars. Louise George Clubb raised the subject first of all in her

1 The essential chapter (no. 5) by Salingar 1974, has created much less resonance than it should have done.

Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time of 1989.[2] Robert Henke raised it again in his *Pastoral Transformations* of 1997,[3] taking up and adding to what had been said by Clubb. From the other side, most general studies of Renaissance pastoral, even those which make a point of exploring Italian-English connections, tend not to say much about *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* We need to start by considering briefly why the links which we now propose tend not to be recognised, from either side.

Scholars who specialise in pastoral literature, even those who focus specifically on pastoral theatre, have perhaps been more interested in the poetry and the ideology of the genre rather than in its dramaturgy. Alternatively they may want to trace the genre's classical antecedents, which are not theatrical and therefore cannot be spoken about in relation to dramaturgical structure. When discussing Italian pastoral plays, critics other than Clubb tend to skip over the concrete theatergrams of plot which dramatists repeatedly use, and concentrate on matters of poetic tone, psychology, and social ideology. In addition, many scholars underplay those Italian pastoral dramas which were the run-of-the-mill norm, and concentrate on just two texts which are given greater significance: Tasso's *Aminta* (published in 1580), and Guarini's *Il pastor fido* (progressively revised editions between 1589 and 1602). The influence, on a European scale, of these two plays is undeniable:[4] the huge number of editions and translations of each one is proof enough of that, whereas most other Italian pastoral plays were doing well if they reached a second edition. However, it needs stressing more that these two seminal texts were anomalous, in different ways, in their Italian context. In their story-lines and their dramaturgical theatergrams they do not represent the norm.[5]

2 Clubb's insertion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (henceforward 'MND') into an Italian dramaturgical context can be traced by the entries for the Shakespeare play in her index.

3 Once again, the index entry for *MND* leads to some important statements and connections.

4 They were printed together by John Wolfe in London in 1591, in a volume edited by Giacopo Castelvetro (see Henke 1997, 47).

5 This fact was established for Italian criticism, a little belatedly, by Pieri 1983. It has since been reinforced by Sampson 2006.

A contention of this present essay, already supported by Clubb and Henke, is that the norm needs to be studied alongside the prestigious exceptions. We are dealing here with a cross-European theatre culture where the taking up and re-using of standard plot formats, including blocks of relationships between groups of characters, was a practice which playwrights took for granted. So plays judged as mediocre or derivative should have more importance than has sometimes been attributed to them, when it comes to tracing influences within and between cultures.

Looking at our proposition from the other end, why is it that studies and editions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have hardly ever related it to Italian models or to pastoral drama?[6] The straightforward answer, probably, is that the play contains no characters who are shepherds, and represents no Arcadian community. This objection cannot be brushed aside; but I hope to show here that it might be short-sighted, when one considers other characteristics of Italian plays which belong to, or relate to, the pastoral genre. Meanwhile, it is at least not uncommon for critics of the *Dream* to suggest that the play makes significant references to classical mythology – especially to the Greco-Roman deities and nature spirits of which Italian pastoral made constant use. In what now follows, that uncontested fact will emerge as significant. It will contribute to the firm relationship of dependency which we shall propose between the play and its Italian antecedents; but it will also be relevant to the equally firm individuality which makes the *Dream* impossible simply to absorb within the Italian tradition.

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6 The obvious exception is a rather undisciplined book by McFarland, 1972. Chapter 3 on *MND* says nothing about dramaturgical antecedents, and gives an implausibly rosy view of the play's overall tone. Studies such as the seminal one of Greg 1906, or more recently Chaudhuri 1989, tend to leave *MND* on the margins (Chaudhuri discusses it in the chapter on "The Extension of Pastoral"). Standard editions of *MND* rarely say anything at all about Italian pastoral drama as a possible model: cf. the Arden Shakespeare edition by Brooks 1979, which is otherwise detailed and expansive on the question of sources.

A Midsummer Night's Dream opens with the prospect of a court wedding, between Theseus and Hippolyta. That ceremony provides an important thematic context for what then happens; but it is not part of the active 'drama', because there are no obstacles to it. The wedding which is blocked is that of Lysander and Hermia: they find their desire to marry opposed by Hermia's father, who prefers an alternative suitor. As an opening situation for a dramatic plot, this belongs more to Italian comedy than to Italian pastoral. It offers a formulaic conflict over marriage between an old man and his daughter – a *Vecchio* and an *Innamorata*, in *commedia dell'arte* terms. The complicating presence of Demetrius and Helena produces a total of four *Innamorati* characters, the standard complement for a professional Italian company. Also normal for comedy is the fact that these characters belong to an urban environment – Athens – with functioning laws and an established ruler whose authority can be appealed to. A very conventional Italianate comedy could be developed out of the situation in Act 1. The fact that there are links of friendship between the four lovers, which pre-date their amorous entanglement, might lead to an ideological or moral "battle of love and friendship", which is such a common topos in late 16th-century *commedia grave*;[7] though the fact that such friendship exists more obviously between the two women than the two men would give the issue an interesting twist.

In any case, as we all know, the play takes us in an entirely different direction with the flight of all four lovers out of their urban environment and into the woods. In genre terms this is a flight from comedy into pastoral. Shakespeare shows the forest as a place not only more 'natural'[8] and less civilised than urban Athens, but also subject to powers which are more than human. Those fairy powers step in and sort the four youths and maidens into two couples. The sorting-out is performed by magic. It is not

7 The first play, but by no means the last, to explore this theme was Sforza Oddi's aptly named *Erofilomachia* of 1572. The theme itself comes from a long novellistic tradition, represented in Italy by Boccaccio's story of Tito and Gisippo (*Decameron*, 10.8).

8 What 'natural' means in practice – benevolent, or threatening, or something in between – has been the subject of widely diverging critical views of the play.

attributed to any inner motivation or self-discovery within the four young people themselves. Neither does it rest on a revelation of hidden identities or relationships, which would be another device frequently used in an Italian comedy. The tangle is resolved arbitrarily by Oberon's intervention, after a period of confusion when Puck had got things wrong. The young lovers – and this seems unusual for Shakespeare – are not given any chance to make decisions about their own future, once they enter the alien realm of Nature and Supernature. They scrabble around and quarrel, for our entertainment, manipulated by an exterior power which they cannot comprehend. It is the power of Love, of course, and therefore of a human passion; but its choices are dictated from outside, by flower-juices which come from Cupid and Diana, rather than being driven by any psychological or moral coherence. In the words of Diane Purkiss, in this play "love can be seen as outside the self, something that is done to you by someone else".[9] This topos itself could be seen as deriving from Italian sources, though not perhaps from drama. The Fountains of Love and Hate, whose waters arbitrarily change characters' feelings for one another, are devices used in the Orlando poems of both Boiardo and Ariosto; and the crucial moment when the hard-hearted Angelica finally falls for the boy Medoro (*Orlando furioso*, Canto 19) is narrated as a decision of the god Cupid, who is fed up with her resistance, to lie in wait for her and shoot the necessary arrow. In Shakespeare's *Dream*, however, there is not even this degree of deliberation; and we may feel that if the King of the Fairies eventually pairs the four Athenians off acceptably, this is more by luck than by judgement.[10] Oberon simply ensures a neat dénouement for the play: he is standing in for the dramatist, and for the likely wishes of the audience.

Italian pastoral plays are normally set from the start in Arcadia, away from town. References to the city or the court, which do

9 Purkiss 2000, 168, during a discussion of Renaissance uses of the figure of Cupid.

10 It has been noticed, however, that Oberon's solution does conform to the starting preferences of the two women, rather than of the two men: cf. Dent 1964, 115-29. It is the men's desires which are manipulated by the magic juices, and the women – the human females, that is, as opposed to Titania – are left untouched.

occur, are distant and tend to be critical; and complex interchanges between the two social environments are not often dramatised. But in terms of plot theatergrams, many of these Italian dramas centre on a group of nymphs and shepherds, often four in number, the pattern of whose love attachments needs sorting out. The reasons why they are not neatly paired off to start with vary with every play: this is the area where the Italian dramatists exercise their powers of invention. Quite often, at least one of the nymphs repudiates all suitors, and needs to be persuaded away from a life of sworn chastity: this is a very frequent element in Italian pastoral plots, but one which clearly does not concern us here (granted that for Hermia life in a nunnery ranks as a condemnation). It is also common, however, in Italian pastorals, for there to be a chain of lovers, in which Shepherd A is pursuing Nymph B, who desires Shepherd C, and so forth. Family interference, such as that of Egeus in relation to Hermia, is relatively rare: young pastoral protagonists often operate in a family-free condition, precisely the one which Shakespeare's four in the *Dream* have to flee into the woods to seek.[11] Whatever the problems posited, in the repeated Italian format, a set of 'correct' pairings is achieved for the dénouement. Recalcitrant or misguided nymphs and swains may undergo a simple change of heart, sometimes motivated by pity or fear. The discovery of unknown blood relationships may make some marital couplings impossible. But on many other occasions, a form of supernatural pressure or command, or magical transformation, comes into play. The ways in which this can be constructed also provide great variety; but (as Clubb has long made clear)[12] one can make a broad division between pastorals which make use of supernatural characters on stage, and those which use them as off-stage interventions or threats. There are others, of course, which leave out the supernatural altogether.

We are contemplating therefore a standard, frequently used (though not universal) theatergram which can be extracted from

11 It may be that characters of an older generation became increasingly present in Italian pastoral as the 16th century moved on, after a tendency to use family-free plots in the 1550s and 1560s.

12 For various topologies of pastoral plots, see Clubb 1989, 93-123.

many Italian pastorals. It contains two major elements: (a) an unworkable tangle, sometimes a chain, of amorous affections among a group of young people; and (b) a resolution sought with reference to, or imposed by, a superhuman power. This structure is not most clearly reflected in the two best-known models, *Aminta* and *Il pastor fido*.[13] But the earliest five-act Italian pastoral drama, Agostino Beccari's *Il Sacrificio* of 1554/5, gives us (a), the tangle of lovers which is in part a chain, intervened on by (b), the supernatural in the form of the goddess Diana, in this case manipulating events from off stage. After that, the same format is repeated with variations in enough pastorals to be significant. There are many examples quoted by both Clubb and Henke, but as a sample, we may list the following: Leone de' Sommi: *Irifile* (unpublished, performed 1555-6?); Alberto Lollio: *Aretusa* (printed 1564); Luigi Groto: *Il pentimento amoroso* (performed 1565?, printed 1576, 6 editions); Agostino Argenti: *Lo sfortunato* (printed 1568); Alvise Pasqualigo: *Gl'intricati* (performed 1569?, printed 1581); Isabella Andreini: *Mirtilla* (printed 1588, 9 editions); and the recently edited pastoral in near-tragic mode, Maddalena Campiglia's *Flori* (printed 1588). We could also cite as having particular significance Bartolomeo Rossi's *Fiammella* (printed 1584). Along with Clubb and Henke, we must suggest that examples of this plot format are numerous enough to be regarded as a stereotype.

We have noted that the intervention of superhuman powers is a common, but not universal, element in Italian plots; and that sometimes those powers appear on stage, and sometimes not. In fact, the cases where the superhuman is dramatically personified can be increased in number if we look carefully at some Prologues to Italian pastoral plays. These Prologues are usually delivered by classical deities; and when this is the case the task is particularly often performed by Venus or Cupid or both. These figures of course personify the human emotion which most often governs the plot of

13 *Aminta* concentrates on just one pair of lovers in a style which can almost be called obsessive. The plot of *Il pastor fido* has features in common with our proposed template; but it is innovatory in being dominated by long-standing decrees of Arcadian community law, and by the controlling presence of patriarchs as well as of more distant deities.

the plays which they introduce. They are presented by their authors in relation to a range of theories about how Love operates in the world: sometimes distinctions are made between Venus and Cupid, or between Love and Fury (as in the Prologue to Isabella Andreini's *Mirtilla*). But in all cases, the use of a personification of Love in the Prologue emphasises the fact that amorous passion has power which can override the will of men and of gods, and that this power is controlling what happens in the play. The intention to deploy it, and to overrule the current desires of the nymphs and shepherds concerned, is usually stated explicitly. What is more – and this is something which tends to escape critical attention – the text often indicates that Love is going to be present in the stage action, even if he (or she) is not given any more lines to speak. The earliest example of this is none other than Tasso's *Aminta*. The Prologue is given by Amore dressed as a shepherd. After making it clear that he is going to make Silvia love Aminta whether she likes it or not, he says:

> E, per far sí bell'opra a mio grand'agio,
> io ne vo mescolarmi infra la turba
> de' pastori festanti e coronati . . .
> . . . esser fingendo
> uno di loro schiera.
>
> [And, to carry out such a fine task at my full leisure, / I am going to mingle with the crowd / of celebrating shepherds with their garlands / . . . pretending to be / one of their group.]

He will strike Silvia with his arrow by this stratagem; and the audience sees him already dressed for the part. In Isabella Andreini's *Mirtilla*, the Prologue is a dialogue between Amore and Venere (Venus). Amore also intends to bring various nymphs and shepherds to heel, and proposes that he and his mother should be physically present among them to observe and to act:

> Or qui m'arresto per punirli . . .
> . . . Tu, cara madre,
> meco trattienti in queste selve, intanto
> che segua al mio voler conforme effetto.
> Qui staremo invisibili tra loro,

> E quando sarà tempo, il duro core
> Pungerò lor con questo aurato strale . . .
>
> [I am going to stop here to punish them . . . / You, dear mother ,/ stay along with me in these woods, / until the outcome corresponds to my will. / We shall stay invisible among them, / and when the time comes, I shall pierce / their hard hearts with this golden dart . . .]

Once again, these are two examples among several. It seems perverse not to assume that in performance these symbolic deities are going to do what they say. They will preside over the play as silent stage presences – invisible to the other characters, but having a clear effect on the audience – and at the critical moment, there is no reason why the disguised figure of Amore should not actually make the gesture of striking at the heart of the nymph or shepherd whose feelings are to be brought under control. Even if such physical intervention did not take place, we have a strong sense from these texts that the god of Love is watching and presiding over the action of the play. Such silent 'framing' spectator characters, whose presence may alter the angle from which the audience itself watches the drama, are familiar to students of English Renaissance drama from examples like Revenge and the Ghost of Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

What is the significance of all this for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? We have identified in Italian pastoral dramas two linked tropes which Shakespeare could have used as models. On the one hand, the notion that a personification of Love is present on stage in the Italian plays, taking action to change the affections of human characters to whom he is invisible, suggests the roles of Oberon and Puck in relation to the four lovers. Both in the Italian models and in the *Dream*, the arbitrary power of Amor is stressed: nymphs, shepherds, or Athenians are going to be made to love as Love chooses, irrespective of their own initial inclinations. The notion that Puck becomes effectively a version of Cupid is one which has been proposed by more than one critic of the play.[14] But there are also grounds for arguing that love's unruly power has been delineated

14 Notably by Frank Kermode in 1961, and Noel Purdon in 1979.

for the audience already in a kind of Prologue, just as in the Italian models we have quoted. Helena's speech about Cupid at the end of 1.1 (usually numbered as lines 232 51) has been recognised and analysed as containing a key message about the play; but it has not been remarked that it is positioned to act indeed as a 'Prologue' to the main action, which is about to occur once the scene moves from the court to the countryside.

So far we have dealt with only two of the three recognised strands of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the lovers, and the fairies. Where the third strand is concerned – the 'rude mechanicals' – some significant Italian analogues have already been identified by Clubb and Henke, and again have continued to be ignored by most Shakespeare critics. Both in scripts and in scenarios, from the 1550s onwards, one option for Italian dramatists had been to introduce into Arcadia, or into another magical woodland setting, some ridiculous low-life characters as a separate group from the languishing lovers. This format provides analogies for *The Tempest* as well as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, though that connection too continues to be contested. The contrast between refined nymphs and shepherds and uncivilised rustics or peasants is now known to have been an early feature of Italian dramatic Eclogues;[15] but the first invasions into Arcadia of Italian theatrical clowns who do not belong there, as opposed to comic peasants who do, come in Andrea Calmo's *Egloghe Pastorali* of 1553, and Jacomo Contrini's *Lite amorosa* of 1550 or earlier.[16] The template continued to be followed by other dramatists, and was clearly an accepted theatergram on which to construct variations, as is shown by later texts which continue to exploit it. One of the examples particularly highlighted by Clubb and by Henke is a play by Alvise (or Luigi) Pasqualigo (1536-76?) entitled *Gl'intricati*, published in 1581 but first performed in 1569. The topos appears in Rossi's *Fiammella*, already cited in another

15 The process by which this tendency was established has been narrated in detail by Pieri 1982. The first truly influential play to use crude rustics to mock and satirise the pastoral genre was probably Ruzante's *La pastoral* (c.1520).

16 Calmo 1553 (7 editions); Contrini 1550 (5 editions). The 1550 edition of the Contrini is the earliest now surviving (plus an undated one in the Vatican which could theoretically be even earlier). Clubb (1989, 102) was only aware of the 1568 printing.

context; in the 1611 printed scenarios of Flaminio Scala (Giornata 49, *L'Arbore incantato*); in other scenarios edited by Ferdinando Neri and quoted by Kathleen Lea; and in a play by Giovan Battista Andreini (*La Centaura*, 1622).[17] Altogether, although Shakepeare's 'mechanicals' also draw on other more native sources (and on a general tendency, which transcends individual cultures, to poke fun at the half-educated lower classes), we cannot exclude some input even here from Italian dramatic plots.

I would suggest therefore as a simple fact that many theatergrams and large-scale plot elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are similar to repeated formats in Italian pastoral drama. They seem too numerous and too substantial to be mere coincidence; and the similarities are great enough to justify proposals about an Italian influence on Shakespeare's play. In addition, though, it is necessary to explore in more detail the equally important ways in which Shakespeare diverges from Italian models, as well as arguably depending on them. On the surface, this may seem like an exercise in stating the obvious: any reader could come up with a copious list of elements in the *Dream* which do not resemble Italian pastoral drama. Nevertheless, some of Shakespeare's personal choices in this play, and the cultural resources on which he drew, carry significance for a volume of essays on transcultural relationships in drama, and can therefore bear some contemplation.

One way in which Shakespeare offers his own original development of the Italian theatergrams lies in his combining three potentially self-contained dramas in one play. When we read and view Shakespeare, we are always impressed by his ability to impose thematic unities on apparently disparate material; but we must not lose sight of the fact that the material was disparate to start with. With Italian dramatists, it is easier to perceive and distinguish the pre-existing theatergrams which are being combined on any one occasion. Most relevant, for our present discussion, is that when superhuman deities play an active part in the plot of an Italian

17 Scala 1611; modern edition Marotti 1976, where *L'Arbore incantato* appears in vol. 2, 507-15. Neri 1913; Lea 1934, vol. 1, 201-3; vol. 2, 444 and 509; Andreini 1622. There is no modern edition of Andreini's multi-genre play, but its plot is summarised by Ferdinando Taviani in Alonge 1989.

pastoral, they act on the human nymphs and shepherds but not on each other. Diana, Venus and Cupid (the most frequent presences) are timeless fixities: Diana represents chastity, and Venus her opposite, for all time. Italian dramatists do not convert these conflicts of the gods into a particular story invented for one particular play. Still less would they think of having a human character used as an unwilling tool in an unseemly divine quarrel.[18]

In fact the clearest divergence from Italian sources, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is the very nature of the supernatural world which Shakespeare chooses to incorporate into the play. Fairies are different from classical gods and goddesses – and even from the oracles and magicians also used in some Italian pastorals, whose characteristics ultimately derive from fiction of a Greco-Roman pattern. Obvious though this may be, it is still a fact whose implications need thinking about more carefully.

We think we know more or less who the Greco-Roman divinities and demi-divinities are, and where they come from: what they may have stood for in the imaginations of 16th-century Italians will be discussed shortly below. The category 'fairy' is less easily definable. It relates loosely to various northern European mythologies (Nordic as well as Celtic); but in drama, specifically, it seems to belong largely to the British Isles. There, as well as having a fluid identity in unwritten folklore, fairies had acquired a certain literary substance by Shakespeare's time via their appearance in English (and also French) romance narrative. A recent, and extremely persuasive, study of fairies in romance comes from Helen Cooper (2004, esp. 173-217), and subsequent remarks in the present essay are strongly influenced by her definitions. Cooper underlines most of all how uncertainly the 'fairy species' fitted into any orthodox Christian world-view:

> Although they were sometimes given a place in the divinely created order of beings, fairies sit very uneasily within a Christian context, and tend to be made the subjects of works whose ideologies are oblique to orthodox piety . . . Above all, they are other in a fuller

18 The one clear exception to this generalisation is Groto 1583: this is at least in part a pastoral adaptation of Plautus's *Amphitruo*, which makes particular use of comic or semi-comic deities.

> sense than almost any of the ways in which the term is now used . . . Fairies come from the Otherworld, and are unassimilable. It is never going to be possible to bridge the gulf between the two worlds . . . (173-4)

> Popular belief, and the romances with it, most commonly took fairies to be outside theological schemata, a third order alongside the angelic (fallen or not) and the human. The place occupied by the fairies was, therefore, most often defined simply as *somewhere else*: a fifth world to set beside Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and middle-earth. (178)

It is the presence in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of this invasive, entirely English, entirely non-Classical range of beings that differentiates the play most clearly, on the surface, from the divine and semi-divine characters of Italian pastoral. Nevertheless, a considerable body of critical writing on the play has perceived how Shakespeare made explicit links between one set of imagined superhuman powers and another.

We have already noted, for example, how Puck has been seen as taking on the role of Cupid. Oberon's speech (in 2.1.154-74) says that the love-juice in the flower, which Puck then applies to young men's eyes, came from Cupid's arrow. Puck's name, and Oberon's, come from English traditions of literature and folklore; but Titania is a name borrowed from Ovid, applied variously to Circe, to Diana and to Proserpina (Cooper 2004, 176). Shakespeare was writing within a culture which knew its classical mythology perfectly well, but had to place it alongside another legendary world of mysterious non-human beings. There were attempts in Shakespeare's time to say that the two sets of nature spirits, northern and Greco-Roman, were ultimately the same. Reference is now often made to Thomas Nashe, writing in 1594 around the time when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was being composed, and identifying

> the Robbin-good-fellowes, Elfes, Fairies, Hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former daies and the fantasticall world of Greece ycleaped Fawnes, Satyres, Dryades & *Hamadryades*.[19]

19 Nashe 1594, ed. McKerrow 1956, vol. 1, 347. The passage from James VI and I, is cited in Purdon 1974.

A similar remark was made by King James VI of Scotland, before he inherited the English throne: in his *Daemonologie* printed in 1597, he writes of "That fourth kind of spirits quhilk be <=by> the gentiles was called Diana and her wandering court, and among us called the Phairie".

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, regular reference is made to classical deities, as we would expect in a play set in an Athens ruled by Theseus; and Shakespeare shows an awareness that he might choose to conflate the characteristics and the powers of Greco-Roman gods and demi-gods with those of the English fairies. However, Cupid and Diana are only evoked at a distance, and the characters whom the audience see belong firmly to the alternative tradition. In despite of Thomas Nashe, this play contains no Fawns, Satyrs or Dryads. Italian dramatists however, alongside divinities such as Venus, Cupid and Diana, did make theatrical use of minor Greco-Roman nature spirits, dwelling in trees or water. (These demiurge *ninfe* were differentiated, for the most part, from the human 'nymphs' who were loved by human shepherds). Frequent use was made in particular of the figure of the satyr, who although frequently bestial in his desires was nevertheless accorded the classical status of a demi-god. We need to consider the imaginative function in drama on the one hand of fairies in Shakespeare, and on the other hand of classical pagan gods in the Italian Renaissance. What did these figures actually mean to their respective audiences?

In Italy it had been Boccaccio, in the 14th century, who first started writing vernacular fictions in the pastoral mode. By the 16th century it was assumed that any cultured person who read or composed serious literature would have acquired a proper knowledge of the classical gods from the Humanist educational curriculum. It was in this spirit, presumably, that Classical pagan mythology was put on to the Renaissance stage, in fictions offered to a firmly Christian public. Nobody on either side of the Italian footlights *believed* in Diana, Venus, Cupid and Apollo, nor in satyrs or other classical woodland spirits; so their deployment in fiction raised no theological unease. The less educated elements of Italian society did not believe in them either – so Humanist-educated gentry did not have to assert their intellectual superiority by rejecting, or ironising, an aspect of popular culture from which they

had chosen to distance themselves. For these aristocrats, classical gods and goddesses were on the one hand a common point of reference, confirming to everyone concerned that they shared the same privileged culture. On the other hand, they were imported metaphors or personifications, whose value everyone understood precisely because the cultural code was shared. Their use in any kind of Renaissance artefact – visual, literary or dramatic – was conscious, always intellectually justified, and detached from any subliminal level of the collective imagination.

With Shakespeare's fairies, the situation was not so simple. They had, like the classical gods, a substantial literary tradition, as Helen Cooper's study of romance makes clear. But they also overlapped with a continuing if dwindling strand of actual folk superstition. Shakespeare himself may not have believed literally in fairies, his actors and patrons may not have believed in them, but they knew that there were people in their society who were not so sure. Some of those people might well be in the audience. King James himself might have warned his readers against credulousness about 'the Phairie', but he was less sceptical about witchcraft – or so we gather from the critical and historical information which accumulates around Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. When Shakespeare put Oberon and Titania and Puck on stage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he did allow some suggestive overlap with classical mythology – he deliberately provided, in Helen Cooper's well-chosen phrase, "some slippage between the classical and native traditions" (2004, 177). Among other things, this acted as a sign to his more sophisticated friends and spectators that he was aware of what he was doing. But in the last resort his fairies are those described by Helen Cooper: not diabolic in a Christian sense ("we are spirits of another sort", says Oberon), but not angelic either. They are obstinately Other: they pertain to a world and a status which is ultimately (as Cooper says) "inscrutable" (178). The Otherworld, the '*somewhere else*', in which they spend their time is sometimes in the play given the name of 'India' – but that is only a partial rationalisation, for spectators who do not really know where or what India is. And their magical control over the world's natural patterns, famously described as having been disrupted by the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, might be seen by some as an analogy with the Fawns

and Dryads borrowed rationally and safely from another culture; but it also melds uneasily into popular superstitions about Robin Goodfellow curdling the milk and taking on the form of animals to lead people astray. Shakespeare knew that he was creating an imaginative world whose status might be problematic for his audience, one which deliberately avoided neat explanations whether theological or artistic. He was, at least potentially, probing places in a spectator's psyche which might be delightful but might equally be uncomfortable. He was prepared to disturb, in a way which was entirely foreign to the writers of Italian Humanist pastoral.

There are two passages of text in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which particularly support this comment. One of them is Bottom's speech when he emerges from his enchantment, without his ass's head, in 4.1. Without ignoring the basic fact that his character is a bit of a fool, Shakespeare none the less gives us a convincing glimpse of a mind confused, groping for memories of an experience which is already fading but which he is reluctant to lose. An actor who does not, just for the briefest of moments, seem about to burst into tears before regaining his normal bluster is guilty of criminal negligence. It reminds us – in conformity with the play's title – of what it is like to wake after a dream and fail to remember it; but Shakespeare has also dared to suggest, fleetingly, that what the dream contained was a kind of bliss beyond mortal comprehension. "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was!" It has been noticed that this is a parody, astonishing and even potentially blasphemous, of St Paul's reference to the joys of heaven in the First Epistle to the Corinthians[20] – a passage then connected with the saint's out-of-body experience as mentioned in his Second Epistle. R.A. Foakes puts firm limitations on the meaning of this allusion: "the heaven revealed to Bottom corresponds to the limits of his imagination . . ." (Foakes 2003, 35). However limited it is,

20 The version quoted is that of the Bishops' Bible, available to Shakespeare: "The eye of man hath not seene, and the eare hath not heard, neither have entred into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him". (1 Cor. 2, 9 10) The notion that Paul has himself seen these things comes in 2 Cor. 12.

though, it is still a kind of heaven; which means that Shakespeare has defiantly absorbed the theological ambiguity of the fairy world into his play. Being made love to by Titania, in whatever ridiculous circumstances, is an experience on a different plane from the normal; and there is no escaping a reminder of English ballads such as that of Thomas the Rhymer, about mortals kidnapped into the '*somewhere else*' of a Fairy Queen and subjected to seven years of mind-boggling sexual slavery. Fairies are superhuman – are they also in some sense divine? As a kind of escape route from the dangerous implications of all this comes the second significant passage of the play, where the notion is offered that not only the characters but the audience too have been caught up in a dream. This is not just a fancy modern critical construction, but is made explicit in Puck's closing address: "Think but this, and all is mended: / That you have but slumbered here / While these visions did appear".

No Italian dramatist ventures into such territory, subverting the spectator's straightforward enjoyment of a manufactured spectacle by uneasy notions about an Otherworld, about dreams and their revelation of desire. (It would of course eventually be done in the more adventurous Spanish theatre tradition, in Calderón's *La Vida es sueño*). No Italian pastoral dramatist would have created a text which raised such psychological or theological problems, nor would he then have tried to solve them by invoking a double level in the dramatic experience. The fictional and imaginative status of Cupid and Diana, of Apollo or Mars or Jupiter, was for educated Italian society entirely explicable and undisturbing. Even the half-bestial half-divine satyr, the figure which could potentially have provided some discomfort by reminding spectators of their own less respectable desires, was in practice disarmed by being made a butt of comic intrigue, even of tricks played by females. I would argue that, in Italy, the Humanist comic tradition was one where the audience usually gained its enjoyment from a superior distance, and was rarely invited to identify with characters on stage or ask itself awkward questions. Moral and satirical points, when made at all, were conveyed by exposing and mocking characters' exterior behaviour, rather than by directly accusing the audience or by psychological inquiry. The new pastoral genre in Italy may then have got closer to the bone in its investigations of erotic

emotion; but classical divinities on stage did not participate in that 'interiority'. Within the fiction they were something other than human; in instrumental terms they were intellectually symbolic, rather than psychologically subliminal. The two imaginative worlds created by Shakespeare and by his Italian dramaturgical analogues are vastly different, even seriously incompatible.

That last statement is unlikely to surprise many readers who did not expect in the first place to find any connection between the *Dream* and Italian pastoral plays. It is all the more important, therefore, to go back and stress the points made in the earlier part of this essay. Although the experiences offered to audiences by these two types of drama have little in common, they are nevertheless constructed out of theatergrams which are substantially the same. The flesh, features and voice are very different – but the skeleton is similar. In the context of a volume about transcultural similarities and influences, it is important to give equal weight to the dependence and to the divergence. Differences remain immense between drama in England and in Italy at the end of the 16th century. They are differences not only in language, not only in practical and social organisation of theatre itself, but also in the cultural background which was creatively used by dramatists, actors and audiences. There were frontiers within Europe – political, social, and linguistic – which enforced firm differences between national or regional aims and practices in theatre, as in other areas of cultural life. It is equally true, though, that these borders were regularly crossed – especially in an age when Humanist education was turning classical models and references into a compulsory artistic language for European rulers and aristocrats. Italian theatre of all kinds had been a major agent in propounding that artistic language; and, if only because of its substantial chronological precedence, it was there to be absorbed by all. Every stage practitioner was aware of its existence. Its influence sneaked across frontiers on a regular basis, either as declared goods or as contraband, even when the frontier was the English Channel. In this case, an English Fairyland was invaded and re-structured along recognisably Italianate lines; but it was obstinate enough not to lose its more intimate character.

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14

The Tempest and Italian Improvised Theatre

There exists a critical prejudice, which seems to be quite long-standing, maintaining that *The Tempest* is one Shakespeare play – perhaps the only one – whose plot comes entirely from the dramatist's imagination, without being based on any narrative or dramatic source. It is a myth regularly perpetuated in programme notes even for the most prestigious theatre companies.[1] I shall show here, not for the first time, that this is simply untrue. There is a substantial body of material, mostly but not exclusively in the form of scenarios for improvisation, which show that dramatic models for Prospero's island and its inhabitants were established in Italy, well before the first performance of *The Tempest* in 1611.

The relevant Italian material has been available now to scholars for nearly a century: many scenarios were first published by Ferdinando Neri in 1913. Since then, at intervals, other critics and historians have drawn attention to their importance, and also added more texts which need considering.[2] The response of Shakespearean critics has continued, on the whole, to be a deafening silence. There seems to be an ingrained assumption by anglocentric scholars who themselves have no knowledge of early modern Italian drama that English Tudor and Stuart dramatists were equally ignorant of it –

1 For example, in the RSC programme of 2006, the cultural critic Marina Warner wrote: "Unusually for him, Shakespeare was not working with an existing story . . . He had 'a true report' of a shipwreck in the New World . . . But little else provided the matter of the play". In the Northern Broadsides programme of 2007, the theatre translator and adaptor Mike Poulton wrote: "There's no mouldy old tale from which to lift a story. The structure of the play is going to be the powers of his imagination".

2 Principal sources are Lea 1934; Andrews 2004, 123-49; Henke 2007, 43-58; and Calvi 2012, 154-170.

despite works such as Gascoigne's *Supposes* and Munday's *Fedele and Fortunio* which are clearly adaptations of Italian plays. The precise means by which Shakespeare and others gained knowledge, even at a distance, of the content and methodology of Italian drama will have varied from individual to individual, and will rarely have left documentary traces. But when sheer concrete similarity between English and Italian dramatic formulae reaches a certain level of frequency, then common sense leads us to conclude that we must be dealing with something more than a coincidence; and this, I shall argue here, is the case for Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

It is necessary also, however, to understand accurately the nature of the Italian phenomenon with which we are dealing. The least obstinately anglocentric editor of *The Tempest* has been Frank Kermode (1975). He gave careful consideration to the scenarios as possible sources; but he was induced to play down their relevance most of all by factual misunderstandings about what kind of theatre those scenarios represented, and about the dates which can be attached to their content. This essay will address those particular misapprehensions, as well as give yet another account of what the Italian texts repeatedly contain.

In engaging with Italian improvised, unscripted, theatre before and after 1600, I have chosen not to use the term *commedia dell'arte*. The meaning of that term – 'comedy of the professionals' – is not deeply inappropriate for the period; but the words themselves do not appear before 1750, in a play (*Il teatro comico*) by Carlo Goldoni. Because of its critical history since the 19th century, the label has come to imply a separate genre, distinct from all types of scripted drama, and a tendency towards cartoon-like stage farce. Such notions have some validity with regard to 'Italian comedy' in the 18th century, especially as it developed in France; but they are distracting and misleading in relation to the much more complex and less stratified world of Italian theatre which flourished at the time of Shakespeare.

The main thrust of this inquiry is to identify a set of large-scale plot theatergrams which were common in Italian scenarios, and of which – using the 'unlikely coincidence' argument – it is hard to conclude Shakespeare was not in some way aware. For reasons which will emerge, however, I shall start with a comparison on a smaller scale, regarding the content and structure of a single scene.

In 3.2 of *The Tempest*, we have Ariel eavesdropping on the conspiratorial conversation between Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban. Ariel is invisible to the other three, but of course visible to the audience. Three times Ariel interjects the words “Thou liest!” into their exchanges. Since the others cannot see him, they of course attribute the accusation to someone else present, and in the end Trinculo gets beaten for something which he did not say. To a reader accustomed to Italian scenarios, this scene feels very much like the sort of trick which a Zani or Arlecchino would play on other characters – though in Italian examples the trickster, not having magical powers, would be hidden behind something (or using ventriloquism) rather than actually invisible. The Italian feel of the scene does not depend only on the trick itself, but most of all on the fact that Ariel says the same words more than once. Repetition was one of the most common comic structures in Italian improvised theatre, partly because it is a pattern which overrides the need to memorise lines.[3] An actor does not need to learn a verbal text – he simply has to understand the basic shape of the gag, and pursue it. What is more, the repetition is actually funny in itself: for a while, at least, the more often Zani says “Thou liest!”, or equivalent, the more laughs he is likely to get. In improvisation, the number of times the same words are repeated is in the control of the actor, and he will stop when he feels that he has done enough for that particular performance. This is the structure which in analyses of dialogue units in improvised theatre, I have referred to as the ‘elastic gag’,[4] because any sequence involving such repetition can be ‘elastically’ stretched or curtailed by actors according to their judgement.

In this particular case, one can point not just to a generic or structural similarity, but also to a concrete analogy from an Italian scenario, involving the same comic concept. In 1611 (the same year as the first performance of *The Tempest* – and this, unlike other things treated in this essay, really is a casual coincidence), the actor-manager Flaminio Scala published the only collection of scenarios

3 This tendency is now addressed in Andrews 2022, 139-43.

4 The concept was introduced in Andrews 1991, now no. 4 in the present volume.

ever to be printed while the genre was still flourishing.[5] Scala's fourteenth item out of fifty – a comedy entitled *Il pellegrino fido amante* – contains a short sequence given to Arlecchino which uses something close to Ariel's "Thou liest!" gag in a different dramatic context. This, with my own emphases added in bold type, is the text of the closing sequence of act 1 (which, if Scala had numbered his scenes, would count as Scenes 6 and 7):

> [Scena 6]
> . . . Fabrizio, ridendo, racconta le miserie de gli amanti, dicendo in uno <*sic*> male d'Amore,[6] in quello
>
> [Scena 7]
> ARLECCHINO vestito da furfante, **li dà una mentita, e fugge**. Fabrizio di nuovo torna a dir male d'Amore. Arlecchino **fa il medesimo, e fugge**. Fabrizio caccia mano alla spada, e li corre dietro; e qui finisce l'Atto primo. (Scala 1611, 42*r*)
>
> [. . . Fabrizio, laughing, tells stories of the sufferings of lovers, in each case <?> saying bad things about Love; next
>
> ARLECCHINO dressed as a ruffian, **calls him a liar, and runs away**. Fabrizio goes back to saying bad things about Love. Arlecchino **does the same again, and runs away**. Fabrizio draws his sword and runs after him; and here the first Act ends. (Andrews 2008: 72-3)]

Arlecchino was not on stage during scene 6; so he has to burst in from outside with his first "Thou liest!" (narrated as "li dà una mentita") and make the audience jump. The fact that he interrupts twice, in a printed version of the scenario, is in effect an invitation for the actor to use the words as often as he likes – elastically – during the slapstick mayhem which concludes the act.

In this case, of course, Arlecchino is not invisible or in hiding, and does not cause the same kind of confusion as that produced by Ariel; but Scala shows us here an example of "Thou liest!" being repeated with a disruptive comic effect. There is another case of Italian improvising clowns playing with truth and disbelief.

5 Scala 1611; now photographically reproduced by ForgottenBooks.com, 2018. An English version of most of these scenarios is Andrews 2008.

6 The garbled phrasing here is probably a printer's error.

Kathleen Lea, in her *Italian Popular Comedy* of 1934, translated a scenario which appeared in English as *The Unbelieving Zanni and the Four Alike* (Lea 2, 602-9).[7] That text uses Zanni's constant repetition that he "doesn't believe" whatever is said to him (using phrases such as "non lo crede", "non gli crede", etc.; but also "le dà una mentita", as in Scala) as a running catch phrase for the play.[8] This is another example of the centrality of repeated gags and phrases to the dramaturgy of improvised theatre. It is also another example of repetition around concepts (or accusations) of what is and is not true.

Scala's collection dates, as we have noted, from the same year as *The Tempest.* It is unlikely that any of the other surviving collections of scenarios,[9] all of which remain in manuscript, come from earlier than 1611: the only ones which are actually dated (the two volumes by Locatelli) are from 1618 and 1622. Anglophone scholars have used these later dates as a reason for denying any connection between this kind of Italian material and Shakespeare's plays. But those scholars have not understood the nature of the surviving Italian collections. We are not dealing here – and we never will be – with the kind of source relationship which is explored in normal textual criticism. The reappearance – in Shakespeare, in Scala, and in the Correr manuscript – of versions of that repeated elastic "Thou liest!" gag tells us only that by 1611 that joke, or scenic idea, already existed. It existed in a stock of theatre material which transcended linguistic boundaries, an orally transmitted patrimony available for any clown or any dramatist to use. With scenarios, the date at which they were composed – in the rare cases when we know that date – is never anything more than a *terminus ante quem.* None of the material which was included in Scala, or in Locatelli,

7 Lea 1943, vol. 2, 602-9. The original, *Zanni incredibile con quattro simili*, is scenario no. 21 in the 17th-century manuscript collection in the Biblioteca Correr, Venezia. The collection is edited by Carmelo Alberti, as *Gli scenari Correr. La commedia dell'arte a Venezia*, with the relevant scenario on 134-7.

8 The gag exhausts itself eventually, and is not used in the concluding third act. (In passing we might note that the plot of this scenario, with its twin masters and twin Zannis, has some echoes of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*).

9 A selective list of the principal collections is included as Appendix A to the present essay.

or in the Correr manuscript, was invented at the moment when the collection was put together. Everything in those compilations – and this is absolutely by definition – was put there precisely because it had already been used by professional companies, because it was circulating in a commonly owned repertoire, because the compiler judged that it worked and so was worth recording. The authors of two 17th-century manuscript collections, the Locatelli and Corsini collections, state in Robert Henke's words, that "they are merely recording scenarios that have long been in existence" (2007, 51). It is impossible for us to guess how long any theatergram, large or small, had been in the repertoire.

I say 'large or small' because we are not just dealing with isolated comic gags. *The Tempest* is based on a well-known well-diffused Italian plot template, a formula on which professional troupes regularly played a series of variations. Robert Henke, in his article of 2007, has given it the genre label 'magical pastoral', located in 'Arcadian scenarios'. It has a set of easily defined components – in terms of characters, relationships and setting – which can be listed here.

1. The story takes place in a remote realm or territory, set apart from normal civilisation. This can be an island on which characters can be shipwrecked, but it can equally be an isolated woodland Arcadia (hence Henke's label). The fact that the action takes place far away from cities and palaces is what tended to give these dramas the genre label of *pastorale*, or *commedia pastorale*.

2. The territory is ruled over by a person with magical powers – usually a male *Mago*, but sometimes a female *Maga* – who presumes to control the other characters in the play, either for their own good, or for his or her own enjoyment.

3. Those characters will include anonymous aerial *Spiriti*, and a more earthy Satyr (*Satiro*) or Wild Man (*Selvatico*), both of these non-human categories being indigenous to the locality. The *Spiriti* are usually anonymous and wordless, simply contributing on command to elaborate stage effects of magic and marvel. The Satyr or Wild Man is more often a malignant figure, though sometimes (as in our only example of this genre from Flaminio Scala) more of a tame slave to the magician.

4. The human characters fall into two social ranks, the more gentlemanly and the more clownish: what Italian actors would have designated *parti serie* and *parti ridicole*. Most often – and this is the biggest difference from what Shakespeare did with the format in *The Tempest* – the *parti serie* are a string of nymphs and shepherds with amorous problems, often a chain of Nymph A in love with Shepherd B who pursues Nymph C who pines for Shepherd D. And Shepherd D is likely to be besotted on Nymph A. (This of course is much more like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* than *The Tempest*: something of which editors of the *Dream* need to be aware). These 'serious' characters are most often identified as permanent residents of the island, or of the Arcadian territory.
5. The *parti ridicole* come straight from the more farcical side of Italian improvised theatre: figures like Pantalone, Dottor Graziano, Zanni, Burattino, Policinella, even a braggart Capitano. They are usually newcomers to the land who arrived there by chance or against their will, often victims of shipwreck like Shakespeare's Trinculo and Stephano. Occasionally we might find such vagabond characters running into Zanni the peasant, presented as a permanent lower-class resident of the magician's realm.
6. The events dramatised in this sort of setting always involve – sooner or later, and often for the whole of the play – the *Mago/Maga* interfering in the affairs of the human characters. With the *parti serie* – who as we have said are amorous nymphs and shepherds – he imposes solutions which sort them into acceptable pairings. The *parti ridicole* are subversive and have to be called to order: sometimes they interfere with the shepherds or threaten the nymphs, sometimes they actually conspire against the magician. It is often made clear to them that their lower social class and lower standards of behaviour should not only deprive them of any power in the realm, but also ban them from any kind of love relationship acceptable to the more refined shepherds. Clownish lust is incompatible with what we might still be calling courtly love. And frequently, of course, the sub-human *Satiro* or *Selvatico* – the 'Caliban', if we choose to make that analogy – also has erotic designs on the nymphs which have to be foiled or crushed: this was a standard component of Italian scripted pastoral drama from its beginnings in the 1550s. However, the attitude which the

audience are expected to take to the magician character can vary significantly from play to play. Sometimes his/her actions and interventions are benign, and lead to a kind of justice. Sometimes his/her motivation is more selfish, in which case he/she may be deprived of power in the end by a divine intervention represented by classical deities (because in Counter-Reformation Italy this kind of fiction was always carefully removed from any reference to a Christian world or a Christian religion). We shall see at least one example of a magician choosing to give up his magic of his own free will. Meanwhile, though, the methods used by the sorcerer often involve a kind of magical violence against other characters. They can be metamorphosed into animals, trees or fountains – or they can be reduced to temporary insanity, just as Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio become "distracted" (*The Tempest* 5.1) at Prospero's hands.

These generalisations are made on the basis of twelve surviving scenarios: most of them have been reproduced in modern studies, and are cited in detail by Henke in his 2007 article "Transforming Tragicomedy". The full list of twelve is reproduced at the end of this article, as Appendix B. Some of the titles appear in more than one manuscript compilation, and indeed one of them appears in two different versions in the same collection (*Il Pantaloncino*, in the Corsiniana).

There are two major things to say about the scenarios in this list.

The first is to reiterate the crucial point about dates, without which we could not consider all these stories for the stage in relation to Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Scala published his volume in 1611, and most of the manuscript collections listed date from later in the 17th century. But we must insist once more that the dates attached to those pieces of printed or written paper do not show us when the material which they contain entered the professional repertoire. In any case, we are not making a direct textual connection between *The Tempest* and those documents as such – rather we are suggesting that both *The Tempest* and the 'magical pastoral' scenarios are fishing in an existing pool of plot theatergrams which dramatists and practitioners could access by a variety of means. We may not now possess any other pieces of paper containing those theatergrams, with dates anterior to 1611 which would enable modern textual scholars to construct a comfortable stemma. But

paper documents which happen to have survived for us are not the only way in which such material circulated, in early modern theatre culture. The application of strict textual criteria does not work. If a unit of plot is to be found in Scala or in Locatelli or in the Corsini Library, that means that it had been used before, probably many times. This fact is supported by our seeing some of these titles appearing more than once, picked up in slightly different versions from different professional troupes, who had adapted them to ephemeral performing contexts and varying resources.

I shall return shortly to questions of dating, and reinforce the argument in another way. But there is a second point to make regarding dramaturgical methodology: it is implied by the list itself, and by some of the generalisations which we have been making about this one particular genre. We have mentioned similarities of framework between one play and another, but also hinted at some differences. It was essential that there should be differences. For professional players, there was no point in simply repeating every single element in an existing formula or template. The public wanted novelty – so every new 'magical pastoral' story needed to offer a surprise, an entertaining variant. The job of a company manager (*capocomico*), putting together a scenario, was to identify and use existing tropes, familiar enough for an audience to accept them without too much strain, but then to graft something slightly unexpected on to the expected. All sorts of metaphors are possible here, to describe this fundamental principle of dramaturgy: "ringing the changes"; "reshuffling the cards"; "shaking the kaleidoscope box"; or indeed the analogy with jazz composition, which is being suggested increasingly often by modern theatre historians – variations on a recognisable theme, which also retain a recognisable style.[10]

One example, particularly relevant to *The Tempest*, is how the presiding Wizard or Witch, Sorcerer or Sorceress, can be presented either as sympathetic or as unsympathetic. There are many variants

10 One is tempted to make reference also to the theory of narrative as a 'combinatory process', offered by Italo Calvino in his essay "Cibernetica e fantasmi" ("Cybernetics and Ghosts", 1967), and in *Il castello dei destini incrociati* ("The Castle of Crossed Destinies", 1973). Calvino was influenced in his turn by the analysis of folk tales offered by Vladimir Propp. Both approaches assume constant re-combinations of existing units of material.

just in the treatment of that one stock figure. In the dénouement, the magician can come out either triumphant or defeated; can either remain in possession of his or her magical powers, or be deprived of them. In some plots the magician has a back story, relating to his or her personal past; though in most of them the status and motivation of the presiding figure remain unexplained. Two brief examples will make the point. From the scenario *Il Pantaloncino*, in its Locatelli version, Kathleen Lea gives the following text for the closing scene:

> Tutti lodano il Mago ringratiandolo delli beneficii et delli pericoli dalli quale per mezzo suo sono stati liberati, Mago dice non voler essercitar piu quell'arte, ma voler vivere insieme con loro butta via la verga et il libro ringratiando tutti Giove dichiarando la favola danno fine à l'opera. fine della Comedia. (Lea 1934, 635)
>
> [Everyone praises the Magician, thanking him for benefits received and for the dangers from which they have been liberated by his powers. The Magician says that he doesn't want to practice his art any more, but rather to live with all the others: he throws away his staff and his book. Everyone gives thanks to Jove, and they declare that the story is over and bring the play to an end. end of the Comedy.]

This offers itself as an analogue for Prospero's renunciation of magic in *The Tempest*, and Robert Henke duly quotes it in his article; but it represents just one of a wide range of outcomes and attitudes which 'magical pastoral' can offer. In Flaminio Scala's *Alvida* (Giornata 43, a mixed-genre Opera Reale), we have in 3.18 an example of a magician who has not always been a magician, but was once an official in a royal court:

> [Scene 18]
> Mago inchina il Re d'Egitto, al quale dice essere il suo antico Ministro della religione, che, prevedendo molti strani avvenimenti nella sua Corte, si diede alle selve per rimediar a tutti i disordini, e dove apprese l'arte magica ancora, solo per giovare e non per nuocere altrui . . . (Scala 1611, p. 238*r*)
>
> [The Wizard bows before the King of Egypt, and tells him that he is his former Hight Priest who, foreseeing many strange happenings

> in his Court, took to the woods in order to find remedies for all the disturbances. There he learned the magic arts, but only to do good and not harm . . . (Andrews 2008, 296)]

Once again, this is one variant among many. There is however no example of a magician figure, male or female, who has arrived in the island or in the Arcadian realm accompanied by other members of his or her family. Prospero's daughter Miranda, and the whole baggage of personal and political issues with which he arrived on his island, constitute an initiative which is Shakespeare's alone.

Despite repeated assertions that Shakespeare invented the basic plot of *The Tempest* from scratch, it is clear that Prospero's island and its denizens, both resident and temporary, are based on a plot format which was frequently adopted in Italian scenarios, and which had been firmly established as a story-telling resource for a number of years before 1611. Shakespeare can be seen as creating fresh variations on 'magical pastoral' – pursuing his own much more complicated agenda, but fitting it into the existing dramaturgical template. The extreme reluctance of Frank Kermode, in his otherwise masterly edition of the play, to accept this derivation can be attributed to misunderstandings about Italian improvised theatre, which can be swiftly listed here.

Firstly: Italian professionals were not limited in their repertoire to what Kermode describes as 'jocose pantomime' (1975, 67): they pursued a much wider range of dramatic modes from the farcical to the serious, and often mingled them in a single presentation. (It is here that the use of the 18th-century term *commedia dell'arte*, with its accumulated critical baggage, can be particularly misleading).

Secondly: the scenarios provide retrospective information. Their publication dates do not represent the first moment at which their material became known to audiences or current among theatre practitioners.

The third point of which Kermode was unaware is that Italian scenarios and Italian published full-length plays did not exist in rigidly separate ghettos, but both made regular use of a single body of theatrical material, the outcome being a set of constant overlaps and borrowings between scripted and improvised plays. Despite this essay's choice of title, the Italian sources of *The Tempest* are not all

scenarios for improvisation. Robert Henke has independently drawn attention to two fully scripted Italian plays from the 1580s which are based on the 'magical pastoral' format. They are *Gl'intricati* of 1581 by Alvise Pasqualigo, and *Fiammella* of 1584 by Bartolommeo Rossi, neither of which has yet received a modern edition. These two texts manage to call up between them a significant range of similarities and differences.

Pasqualigo was a Venetian author who is surprisingly hard to pin down biographically: all we know is that his surname is that of a well-known noble family, and he may have fought in the Battle of Lepanto. The dedication to *Gl'intricati* (written by someone else) says that he composed and staged the play in the Dalmatian town of Zara (now Zadar in Croatia) when he was in authority there ("mentre si trovava in reggimento a Zara") (Gamba 1832). The terminology is unspecific, but he may even have been the Venetian governor of the city). *Gl'intricati* is set in Arcadia, and its central plot is a conventional pastoral one about the confusions caused by an amorous chain of lovers. But the refined nymphs and shepherds are plagued by a set of low-life intruders – a Dottor Graziano and a braggart Spanish soldier (two standard Italian professional masks), and a peasant (*Villano*). There is a Wild Man (*Selvatico*) in the play's cast; but his only function here is to speak the prologue and then to bring the play to an end. In the final act, the pastoral characters beg for help from the Sorceress, the *Maga*, whose cave is visible on stage throughout the play. With the help of the usual aerial *Spiriti*, she sorts out the confusion of the lovers by putting them to sleep and magically re-directing their affections. The three clowns are for a moment symbolically transformed into animals, to show them what the nymphs they were pursuing really think of them; then, restored to human form, they are dismissed to their homes with the reproof that they are too crude and vulgar to concern themselves with love:[11]

11 In her pioneering study of pastoral drama, Marzia Pieri generalises on "una rudimentale dottrina dell'amore sublime e nobilitante riservato agli eletti, che presuppone per distinguersi l'opposto complementare del villano incapace di amare" ("a rudimentary doctrine of sublime and nobilitating love reserved for the *élite*, which presupposes in order to define itself a complementary opposite in the peasant incapable of loving").

Non si convien l'Amor con gente vile
Come voi siete . . .
(Pasqualigo, 5.5)

[Love is not suitable for base people / Such as you are . . .]

Bartolommeo Rossi, by contrast, is known to have been a professional actor, the leader of a troupe. The fact that *Fiammella* was printed in Paris (and then never anywhere else) is explained by the fact that in 1584-85 Rossi's company was competing for business in that city with other Italians. There was a flurry of Italian theatre-oriented material published in France in the mid-1580s (including some love letters of Alvise Pasqualigo). We can see this play – which, unusually for comedy, is in verse – as an ambitious attempt to turn an improvised spectacle, which Parisians may already have seen on stage, into a text for reading. This would on the one hand be an advertisement for future shows, and on the other hand demonstrate that professional actors were not generically inferior to literary dramatists. Rossi's Prologue makes that point quite specifically: it takes the form of a rather high-flown dialogue between various personified abstractions, including Ignorance. His play is set in an unspecified woodland territory, with a sea coast. As in most 'magical pastoral', there is contrast, and indeed conflict, between the refined pastoral lovers (a chain of four, this time) and the imported low-life characters. All three of the stage clowns (Pantalone, Graziano, and Bergamino the servant from Bergamo) have been shipwrecked, and Graziano and Bergamino have actually been brought back from the dead by the ruling Mago.

This particular forerunner of Prospero turns out to be a power freak who enjoys manipulating everybody, and intends to take over control from the Olympian gods:

In somma il tempo, il Cielo, e la ragione
Per me saranno retti, e governati.
(Rossi 1584, 1.4)

[To sum up, time and Heaven and reason / Will be controlled and governed by me.]

He deceives the two nymphs into changing their affections, with regard to the two shepherds, by making the shepherds swap their bodies. The clowns are largely left, on this occasion, to run into trouble without his help: they have encounters with a Wild Man (*Salvatico*) and with Famelico the Parasite, and their attempts to rape the nymphs are foiled by the shepherds. The Mago, however, has drawn down Olympian anger against his attempts to override divine law. After an early warning from the Furies, which he ignores, he is brought in the final act before a tribunal consisting of Jupiter, Pluto, Mercury and Proteus, with the Furies again in attendance. His punishment is to be stripped forever of his magical powers, and set permanently in the company of Ignorance.

These two fully scripted plays are very different from each other with regard to their authors, their provenance, their performing ambitions, and the details of their content. They are also different from Shakespeare's *Tempest*; but they use the same 'magical pastoral' setting, and the same groups or categories of characters, which we then find in many scenarios for improvisation, and they offer their individual variations on the theme, just as the scenarios themselves also do. Most of all, their publication dates in the 1580s show that the 'magical pastoral' format was becoming embedded in Italian theatre before Shakespeare himself had written anything at all.

The search for the 'magical pastoral' format might go back even further. In 1533 a pastoral comedy called *Il romito negromante* (The hermit magician) was published by Angelo Cenni, a member of the Congrega dei Rozzi in Siena who used the pseudonym 'Il Risoluto'. In this tale, the eponymous hermit is attempting to exert his control over a small rustic community, and he fluctuates between being hostile and benign. At one point he attempts to rape a nymph; but later on his magical spells rescue her from being transformed into a tree, and enable her to marry her shepherd suitor. More complicated comic intrigues are set up between the hermit and a rough peasant anti-hero. It is hard to propose this text as a source which would have been taken up by other dramatists: the plays produced by the Congrega dei Rozzi were products of a coterie theatre, whose public identified itself with great pride not only as being specifically

Sienese, but also as belonging firmly to the artisan class.[12] The text (printed only once) may have received little diffusion outside Siena. Nevertheless, the appearance of such a play script as early as 1533 suggests that certain narrative formats – probably deriving from folk tale – were familiar currency in Italy, and that quite early in the 16th century they were already seen as raw material for the stage.

Our overall argument is that there was no significant difference between Italian improvised professional theatre and Italian scripted theatre composed by amateurs of all classes. The theatergrams on which *The Tempest* builds its variations come from a large Italian repertoire of dramatic storylines which were used indiscriminately in a wide range of dramatic compositions.

What we are now calling 'magical pastoral' was by Shakespeare's time a well-established trope in an internationally available stock of theatre plot frameworks. Italian dramaturgy, by the end of the 16th century, had settled into a pattern which we can describe simply as 'artisan': a combinatory method of re-arranging existing theatergrams into pleasingly different patterns. This approach was most insistent among professional companies who functioned without a dramatist; and so collections of scenarios make the methodology particularly apparent, because of their more frequent repetitions of the same material. But fully scripted plays, from many different types and classes of dramatist, were being composed in the same way and out of the same stock of material.[13] Recent studies in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama have in fact been suggesting that the same artisan methods – combinatory, imitative, and indeed collaborative – were also familiar to English playwrights of the period.

In composing *The Tempest* Shakespeare was drawing on this well-known dramaturgical formula. It involved an isolated pastoral setting, some fixed blocks of character-types, and relations between those groups which were more open to variation. The reasons why this source material is so often undervalued by critics are not

12 The most recent full account of the Congrega dei Rozzi is to be found in Catoni and De Gregorio 2001.

13 See the 'catalogue' project of Alessandro Piccolomini, described in Andrews 2001, no. 17 in the present volume.

easy to judge; but perhaps the tone has been set for many by the justifiably influential work of Geoffrey Bullough (1975, 235-339). When seeking sources for *The Tempest*, Bullough prioritises factual narrative accounts, from contemporary history, of shipwrecks and newly-discovered realms over templates of fiction and drama. Moreover, although he mentions and indeed translates the scenario *Li tre satiri*, he prioritises European prose and verse literary sources over those which come from Italian Renaissance drama. We would argue that the moral issues and romance narrative tones which Bullough summarises in his pages 265-74 (and which are profitably pursued by most other studies of the play) constitute a thematic beverage which Shakespeare asks his audience to imbibe from a container; and that vessel is a tried and tested dramatic framework of indisputably Italian origin. We would also stress once again, in the face of much resistance, that Shakespeare's Italian sources are not to be found only in prose and verse narrative, but also in works composed for the stage – that is, in the pioneering work of the Italian humanist playwrights who inaugurated modern European theatre, and whose innovations date from the very beginning of the sixteenth century.

There is a more speculative proposal to be made in addition, one which still draws on concepts of 'artisan' dramaturgy in both England and Italy. In his edition of *The Tempest*, Frank Kermode draws attention to some long-standing speculations about the possible existence of an earlier, longer version in which some of the plot lines might have been treated at more length. The suggestion was made in 1921 by a scholar named H.D. Gray, and Kermode summarises it as follows:

> The ordeal by logs, [Gray] suggests, must have cost Ferdinand more pain in the original; the plot against Alonso might have got as far as a second attempt on him; and above all, the conspiracy of Caliban against Prospero, which agitates the mage unreasonably in the extant text, must have gone much further. (1975, 21)

Gray's original reason for stating this is one which we can discount. He was proposing that Prospero's masque in act 4 was a later reluctant addition to the original version of the play, and that inserting the masque had made it necessary to remove other

material. This is a textual hypothesis which has been dismissed by most editors, and I am not going to resurrect it here. However, Gray’s observation about the shape and structure of certain narratives is in itself tenable. The three storylines which he lists here are all inherently capable of being treated at more length (which is a very different statement from saying that Shakespeare did treat them at more length, in a lost earlier version). However, when Kermode dismisses the textual theory, he is right in his turn to say that “neither intrigue” is “demonstrably incomplete”. The reason they are not incomplete is that all three of these plot lines have a beginning, and have a conclusion. But all of them are capable of containing more episodes than they do, between their beginning and their conclusion. They are elastic stories; and in using that term I am making a parallel between structures in large-scale narrative and the elastic structure of single scenes to which I drew attention at the start of this essay.

Let us reconsider briefly the scenes involving “Thou liest!”, or equivalent. The way in which an improvising actor would perceive the structure of such scenes is very simple. The original statement which is going to be contradicted sets the gag in motion. At the end, someone is going to lose their temper, and someone is going to be beaten. In between, the number of repetitions of “Thou liest!” (or “Non ti credo!”, or “Ti do la mentita!”) depends on how long the actors want to prolong the scene in any given performance. The structure is reducible to a simple diagram:

Opening proposition
“Thou liest!”
“Thou liest!”
“Thou liest!”
“Thou liest!”
***Conclusion* [*someone gets beaten*]**

However, the elasticity implies that the repetitions of “Thou liest!” can be reduced . . .

Opening proposition
“Thou liest!”
~~(“Thou liest!”)~~

~~*("Thou liest!")*~~
"Thou liest!"
***Conclusion* [*someone gets beaten*]**

. . . or indeed expanded, without altering the essential nature of the gag.

This same principle can be applied on a much larger scale to the construction of a plot – applied, that is, by a dramatist composing a script, or by the manager of a professional Italian troupe constructing a scenario out of existing theatergrams. If they are removed from *The Tempest* itself, and considered on their own, the particular plot lines which H.D. Gray identified can be seen as having the necessary properties. Ferdinand's subjection by Prospero to a sentence of hard labour, to test his qualities, seems to demand a certain prolongation: the prince needs to serve his time, and make us feel that he has done so, in order for the point to be made. But the number of times we see him carrying his logs, or doing other work, before he is pardoned and released, is a matter of choice for the dramatist:

Ferdinand is set to work
Episode
(Episode)
(Episode)
Episode
Ferdinand is released

The plot has the same elasticity, in potential, as does a single improvisable scene. Gray probably noticed that in *The Tempest* there is really only one 'Episode' depicting Ferdinand's labour in 3.1. It is combined with the love scene between Ferdinand and Miranda; and the next time we see Ferdinand in 4.1, he has already been liberated. One can certainly argue that the prince's ordeal might be more persuasive if it had been prolonged a little.

We could offer the same analysis of the subversive plot to depose and destroy Prospero mounted by Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban – the part of *The Tempest*'s story which has the strongest roots in the Italian 'magical pastoral' analogues, and which is developed at length in some of those relevant plays and scenarios. Here again the

story is essentially elastic, capable of being stretched or curtailed at will:

Conspiracy initiated by Stephano and Caliban
Episode
(Episode)
(Episode)
Episode
Conspiracy foiled by Prospero

We are not suggesting, as Gray did, that there were texts of *The Tempest* now lost, which contained longer versions of those two stories. But we can suggest that Shakespeare was making his own decisions, exercising his own choices, in relation to existing story frameworks which were capable of being dramatised – and may have been dramatised by others – at greater length, as well as with different emphasis.

This was an aspect of the normal artisan craftsmanship which was commonly deployed in dramaturgy in this early modern period in Europe; and we can get a better insight into that *artigianeria* by looking at how dramatists worked in Italy. The scenarios of what has since been called *commedia dell'arte* show us the process more clearly than do fully scripted plays: in scenarios the technique is more raw, more unadorned, more undisguised. But, we would argue, in Italy and in England the same technique can equally be discerned in scripted and in improvised theatre. *The Tempest* belongs to a firm Italo-English tradition.

Appendix A

Principal Manuscript Collections of Italian Scenarios for Improvisation

Adriani, Placido. *Selva ovvero Zibaldone di concetti comici* (1734) [22 scenarios, plus fragmentary material]. Perugia: Biblioteca Comunale, ms. A.20 ('**Adriani**', below).

Anon. *Zibaldone dei soggetti comici da recitarsi all'improvviso* (17th-18th centuries) [183 scenarios, 7 illegible]. Napoli: Bibloteca Nazionale, mss. XI.A.A. 40-41. Modern edition: Cotticelli, Francesco, Goodrich Heck, Anne, and Heck, Thomas F. (2001) (trans. and ed.), *The Commedia dell'Arte in Naples: A Bilingual Edition of the 176 Casamarciano Scenarios*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press ('**Casamarciano**').

Anon. (Ciro Monarca), *Delle opere regie* (mid-17th century) [48 scenarios]. Roma: Biblioteca Casanatense, ms. 4186.

Anon. *Commedie XXIII all'improvviso*, (late 17th century) [22 scenarios]. Firenze: Biblioteca Nazionale, ms. Magliabechiano II.i.90. Modern edition: Bartoli, Adolfo (1880) (ed.), *Scenari inediti della commedia dell'arte*. Firenze; reprinted: Bologna: Forni, 1979.

Anon. *Raccolta dei scenari piú scelti di istrioni* (mid- or early 17th century). [100 scenarios, with title-page illustrations]. Roma: Biblioteca Corsiniana, mss. 45, G.5. and 45, G.6 ('**Corsiniana**').

Anon. *Scenari per il teatro di San Cassiano* (late 17th century) [51 scenarios]. Venezia: Biblioteca Correr, ms. 1040, edited 1996 by Carmelo Alberti: see Works Cited, below.

Anon. *Selva di nuove comedie*, (17th-18th century) [18 scenarios]. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, cod. Barberiano Latino 389 ('**Vaticano**').

Locatelli, Basilio. *Della scena dei soggetti comici* (vol. 1 dated 1618; vol. 2 dated 1622) [103 scenarios]. Roma: Biblioteca Casanatense, ms F.IV.1211-1212 ('**Locatelli**').

Appendix B

Italian 'Magical Pastoral' Scenarios

Locations refer back to Appendix A, and to the single printed collection composed by Flaminio Scala

Alvida, opera reale	Scala 1611
L'arbore incantato, pastorale	Scala 1611
Arcadia incantata	Casamarciano; Adriani
Gli avvenimenti comici, pastorali, e tragici	Scala 1611
Forza della maggia	Vaticano
Il gran mago, commedia pastorale	Locatelli; Corsiniana
La maga, pastorale	Corsiniana
Il mago, pastorale	Corsiniana
La nave, comedia pastorale	Locatelli; Corsiniana
Il Pantaloncino	Locatelli; Corsiniana *(2 versions)*
Proteo, favola pastorale	Locatelli; Corsiniana
Li tre Satiri, favola pastorale	Locatelli; Corsiniana

Originally published in 2014. *Revisiting* The Tempest. *The Capacity to Signify*, edited by Silvia Bigliazzi, and Lisanna Calvi, 45-62. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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15

Resources in Common: Shakespeare and Flaminio Scala

It can still be hard to persuade scholars of Tudor and Jacobean theatre that English playwrights and actors of that period were subject to influence from Italian Renaissance drama – as opposed to Italian Renaissance romance and *novella*, whose presence is well studied and taken for granted.[1] Yet, in a volume devoted to Transnational Mobilities in theatre, the 'mobility' across the English Channel of dramatic theatergrams and performance practices from Italy (where theatre both literary and commercial had been a well-established feature of Humanist culture for decades) is a phenomenon which we should see as so inherently probable that there need to exist very solid grounds for disbelieving it. This is not to deny the very significant differences which exist between dramatic texts composed in England and those from other European countries: in a previous collection of essays we have attempted to measure both contrasts and similarities in a single case, that of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[2] Here I broaden the field of inspection slightly, to look at possible dramaturgical relationships between English Renaissance drama (represented by Shakespeare) and Italian professional improvised theatre[3] (represented by the actor-dramatist Flaminio Scala).

It may be worth remarking, in passing, that although we shall be speaking of 'resources in common' between two theatrical cultures,

1 However, see Marrapodi 2011, in which some contributors do tackle relationships with Italian drama.

2 "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Italian Pastoral" (2008), no. 14 in the present volume.

3 We are now accustomed to applying the term *commedia dell'arte* to this genre, and it will not be possible or convenient to avoid using that designation in the present essay. It none the less needs to be stressed that the phrase does not appear in Italian until 1750 (in Goldoni's play *Il teatro comico*).

it is unlikely that any discernible influences, in dramatic or any other literature, passed back at this time across the Channel from England to Italy. A number of colleagues are now revealing the extent of the impact of English actors who toured Europe in the 17th century; and that impact included the regular adaptation of stage plots which originated in Shakespeare's plays (Katritzky 2008).[4] However, this kind of story seems to apply largely to northern and central Europe. The same tale cannot be told of France, Italy or Spain: it seems that there was a significant linguistic division in this respect between the Europe of Germanic and Slavic languages on the one hand, and the Europe of Romance languages on the other. From what has been discovered so far, we cannot argue that Flaminio Scala, or any other Italian theatre practitioner of the 16th or 17th centuries, had even heard of Shakespeare or of any other English dramatist. It is only much later, after 1700, that knowledge of the Bard begins to penetrate France and Italy.

I shall be arguing here that there was interaction and influence in a northerly direction: that English Renaissance dramatists used plot material which (at the very least) was also being used in Italian theatre both scripted and improvised. The plays of Shakespeare and the scenarios of Scala represent just one example on each side. However, there is an important methodological premise involved: we are not arguing for any direct textual 'reception' involving what are normally described as 'sources'. I shall be claiming rather that English and Italian practitioners were drawing independently on an amorphous stock of material which lent itself to dramatisation but which belonged to no one – to no single dramatist, to no single nation, and to no single language. It was transmitted orally, and not via any surviving written or printed text.

***

Because on this occasion I am discussing improvised forms of Italian theatre, I need to distance myself a little from some other studies which make apparently similar comparisons. Many scholarly visions

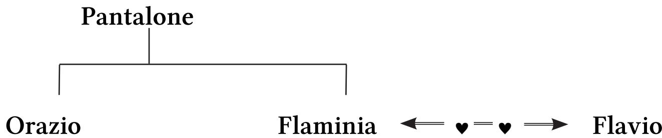
4 The influence and presence of English actors, and their re-working of English dramatic plots, is being discovered in Poland and the Czech lands, as well as in Germany and the Netherlands.

of *commedia dell'arte*, and therefore many attempts to compare this genre with Shakespeare, centre on the energetic caricatured comic masks – the old men (*Vecchi*) and the servants (*Servi*) – rather than on the lovers (*Innamorati*) who in Italy were just as important. This emphasis on the farcical elements makes it more difficult, not easier, to find correspondences between the Italian material and Shakespeare. Despite some efforts to assert the contrary, there are very few of Shakespeare's clowns or of Shakespeare's patriarchs who evoke the comic masks of the Italian tradition. (His pedants and his braggart soldiers may offer some closer resemblance to *arte* masks, as has been remarked in studies of *Love's Labour's Lost*). An unprejudiced eye will find that Shakespeare is not often interested in stereotypes of servants or peasants who are constantly hungry and obsessed with eating, which is a key characteristic of Arlecchino and Zanni. (The one exception may be *The Tempest*, which I shall be discussing later). Nor does he often try to obtain comedy from uncontrolled lower-class lust. English drama in general, at this time, was quite restrained in this respect: the lower classes on stage are not associated with the cheerful promiscuity which we find in many servant characters, male and female, in both scripted and improvised Italian plays. (The noteworthy Shakespearean exception here is the group of characters associated with Falstaff). The same is true of misbehaving elderly men. For example, we do not find in English drama the assumption, very frequent in Italian stage comedy, that female servants in bourgeois households can be expected to have served as concubines to their ageing masters.[5] In Shakespeare in particular, the undignified or immoral behaviour of the old men in Italian comedy, masks like Pantalone and Dottor Graziano, is rarely reflected: he seems remarkably reluctant, for his time, to create grotesque caricatures of family patriarchs.[6]

5 A whole play, Ariosto's *La Lena* of 1528-1529, is built around this situation. It is also taken for granted, without figuring much in the detailed intrigue, in the influential anonymous *Gl'ingannati*, first performed in Siena in 1532.

6 This generalisation is less applicable to other English playwrights. 'Jacobean City comedy' in particular is often more aggressive (in Italian style) than Shakespeare, and makes more fun of elderly men.

Nevertheless, there are often similarities between Shakespeare and Italian material when it comes to structures and relationships of intrigue, as opposed to the clownish characterisation of individual figures. In *commedia dell'arte*, a typical family is often ruled by an obstructive moralistic father, who tries to control his passionate sons and daughters, and who rejects their choice of spouse. The following set of relationships is generically typical:

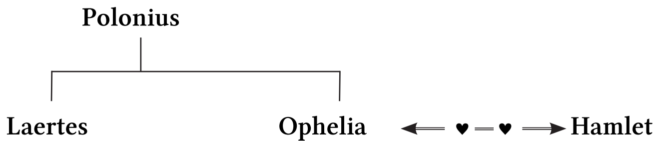


Such a pattern is repeated endlessly in Italy, not only in improvised *commedia dell'arte* but in the more literary *commedia erudita* from which that genre was derived. Shakespeare reproduces it in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. 'Pantalone' is George Page (though the comparison only works in terms of plot relationships: Page is not a caricatured patriarch in the Italian style); 'Flaminia' is Anne Page; and 'Flavio' is Fenton. This play, despite the deeply English tone of its language and social setting, is from a structural point of view Shakespeare's most Italianate comedy.[7] As well as the family relationships delineated above, it contains a comic Pedant or Dottore in Sir Hugh Evans, and a would-be braggart soldier in Dr Caius, who is perhaps also a second Pedant. Both of these, especially the latter, have conspicuous comic speech accents, like the Spanish attributed in Italy to a Capitano. The humiliations inflicted on Falstaff are paralleled in Italian plays written as much as fifty years earlier; and the reason why he deserves them – his inappropriate sexual ambitions – is the same reason which applies to so many

7 See R. Andrews: "Shakespeare and Italian Comedy" (2004), no. 12 in the present volume. The point was made much earlier in Salingar 1974, 188. See also Melchiori 2000, 15-8, where he notes some similarities with Anthony Munday's *Fidele and Fortunio*, itself an adaptation of Pasqualigo's *Il Fedele*. The only Italian source usually quoted for the *Merry Wives* is the non-dramatic *novella* from *Il Pecorone* (2.2), which involves an adulterous lover unwittingly confiding in the husband whom he is cuckolding. I know of no Italian stage play which uses this trope; though it was picked up more than once by Molière.

clownish victims in the Italian canon.[8] Those victims tend to be either caricatured patriarchs or braggart soldiers: perhaps Falstaff too offers elements of both these masks.

Other Shakespearean examples, however, transfer the apparently comic family tensions into a tragic context. We find them in *Hamlet*, with Polonius and his children Laertes and Ophelia (whose suitor, explicitly rejected by her father, is Hamlet himself). There is a structure of relationships here – a 'diagram on the page' – which recalls Italian models; but obviously the tone with which these characters are presented, and the things which eventually happen to them, are very much more sombre than *commedia dell'arte* farce: – [9]



Another clear example of the same family pattern appears in *Romeo and Juliet*, with the Capulet parents, their daughter, and the lover about whom the parents are ignorant until it is too late. In respect of this plot, we shall be investigating below some precise overlaps between Shakespeare and Flaminio Scala.[10]

I am already looking, it must be remarked, at those aspects of plot construction which have been of least interest to many scholars of *commedia dell'arte*. The fascination which the Italian genre inspires usually focuses on much smaller details – on individual jokes and *lazzi*, on physical acrobatics, on the theatrical effect of facial masks, and on all the delightful mysteries which surround improvised delivery. It is now understood that actors built themselves a personal repertoire (*zibaldone*) of speeches and dialogues for recycled delivery, much of it copied or adapted from printed literature and drama. But these private, ephemeral

8 One of the earliest examples of such theatergrams is Alessandro Piccolomini's *Alessandro*, composed in 1536 and first published (in Sienese printings difficult to attribute) in 1540.

9 This point has now been made in much more detail by Frances K. Barasch in 'Hamlet versus *Commedia dell'Arte*', in Marrapodi 2011, 105-17.

10 Relevant to this discussion is Snyder 1979.

collections of material have tended not to survive, especially from the earliest and most creative period of the genre between around 1570 and 1630. (There is one exception to this dearth of evidence, in documents recently discovered in Spain).[11]

We possess much more written evidence about the larger-scale elements of *arte* dramaturgy, to which scholars have paid less attention. We know about the stories performed by the Italian professionals. We know which tales they chose to dramatise, and how their plots were assembled and structured. This evidence, of course, comes from surviving scenarios (*canovacci*), which are by far the largest body of relevant material which has come down to us. We have more than three hundred of these in manuscript collections from the 17th century alone, and then a similar number from the 18th century.[12] In addition to the manuscripts, there is just one collection which was put into print – the earliest one of them all, Flaminio Scala's fifty scenarios entitled *Il Teatro delle Favole Rappresentative* (The Theatre of Tales for Performance), a volume which was published in 1611.[13] Scenarios tell us very little about the detailed performance texture of individual scenes: these were the responsibility of the actors on stage, not of the dramatist or *capocomico* who created the framework. In scenarios, single jokes and *lazzi* are alluded to in a frustrating manner: they sometimes have names, but they are rarely described, so we often cannot reconstruct what they involved or how they were performed. What scenarios do preserve for posterity is something quite different: they record the stories, situations and relationships which *commedia dell'arte* companies chose most often to dramatise.

If one reads a number of scenarios, it soon becomes apparent how much of their creation involved a labour of repetition, or recycling. A relatively small number, certainly a finite number, of well-known and well-tried narrative units is permuted in endlessly different combinations. It has even been suggested that we can trace

11 The *zibaldone* of the actor calling himself Stefanelo Botarga has surfaced in the Palace Library of Madrid. See Ojeda Calvo 2007.

12 A wider selection of individual scenarios than has been previously available can be found in Testaverde 2007.

13 See the two editions Scala 1611 and Scala 1976, the latter edited by Ferruccio Marotti. See also Andrews 2008.

'families' of scenarios, groups in which what is essentially the same story will recur in a series of minor variations, sometimes retaining the same title and sometimes not (Bourqui 1999). For example, the scenario entitled *Il cavadente* (The Tooth-puller), which is no. 12 in Scala's 1611 volume, was still being used in the 18th century, and it appears with an almost identical title (*Cava denti*, in two words) in the Neapolitan collection of the Casamarciano family. Scala's no. 9, *Il marito* (The husband) was later turned by Scala himself into a fully scripted five-act play; but it also reappears in the Locatelli collection of 1618, and again in the Casamarciano collection.

There is however another type of repetition or borrowing of material about which, up to now, much less has been written. A large number of the plots used in scenarios come from outside what we now call *commedia dell'arte*: they can be traced back to plays which were published in Italy as fully composed scripts during the sixteenth century. These same stories, ideas or even single scenes can then be found back on the printed page in Italian or French plays published in the seventeenth century. In this period scripted theatre and improvised theatre existed and functioned in the same world. They were not rigorously separate entities, as a more romanticised view of *commedia dell'arte* would prefer to pretend. Dramatists and troupe leaders made indiscriminate use of storylines which were so well known that they belonged to nobody: the world of theatrical composition was one in which very little attention was paid to concepts of 'author's rights' or 'intellectual property' (Ferrone 1993, 197). I have noted that the professional actor possessed in his or her personal *zibaldone* a stock of speeches, jokes and small-scale scenic devices. Rather than use the word 'improvise', which carries different connotations for modern theatre practitioners, we should perhaps say that *arte* performers 'supplied their own text' from accumulated professional repertoires. In exactly the same way, the *capocomico* who devised scenarios made regular use of a well-known limited repertoire of stories and relationships between characters. A large number of these originated in published plays. In fact there was constant exchange, a kind of cycle of borrowing, between *commedia dell'arte* practitioners and dramatists whom we would now regard as belonging to the world of 'literature'. They all indeed used the same resources.

This perception of the methodology used by professional dramatists is similar to the concept of 'theatergrams' proposed many years ago by Louise George Clubb. A 'theatergram' is a unit in a stage plot, or a typical relationship between stereotyped characters, which can be removed from one dramatic context and inserted into another. Professor Clubb was writing specifically about theatergrams which appear both in the plays of Shakespeare and in written Italian drama. One of her first examples was a confrontation between two recurrent stock figures. On the one hand, an upper-class dramatic heroine, who wants to remain sexually virtuous and faithful to a declared amorous attachment. On the other hand, a lower-class nurse or female servant, who tries to advise her to be more pragmatic, and to accept a change of lover under pressure of circumstances (Clubb 1989, 1-26; 65-89). The confrontation, that is, between Shakespeare's Juliet and her nurse in 3.5 of *Romeo and Juliet*, when the nurse suggests that Juliet should forget Romeo and marry Paris as her parents have arranged. We find a close equivalent of that scene in 2.6 of the Sienese comedy *La Pellegrina* (The Pilgrim Woman): the comedy was drafted in the 1560s, then finally performed in Florence in 1589 for the wedding of the Grand Duke of Tuscany to a French princess. The dramatic situation of the heroine of *La Pellegrina* bears some similarity to that of Juliet, but is not identical. The content and implications of the single scenes from the English and Italian plays resemble each other much more. Fantasising a little, we could see these two dialogues as elaborations (in different words and of course a different language) on a template scene from a hypothetical *commedia dell'arte* scenario. "*Franceschina tells Isabella that she should marry Coviello, saying that one husband is much like another: Isabella insists on remaining faithful to Orazio.*" These words are my invention; but if we were to find their equivalent in a 17th-century Italian *canovaccio*, nobody would be surprised.

This phenomenon of 'resources in common', of theatergrams which recur in both scripted and improvised theatre, in Italy and in France and in Spain and in England, is a massive one: it needs to be illustrated by large numbers of detailed examples, and to be explored via the knowledge and experience of more than one scholar. Every single study of the phenomenon has to be limited

to a small selection of the vast material which is available – partly in order to remain intelligible to an audience or to a reader, partly because no individual theatre historian has read all the plays which could contribute to a global survey. This essay has chosen to examine comparatively the scenarios of Flaminio Scala and the plays of Shakespeare; but a multitude of other examples, using different sources and authors, could lead us to (or spring from) the same theoretical conclusions.

***

My first concrete examples can be theatergrams used in *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare's version is, of course, familiar to us as a tragedy, ending in the death of the two lovers. That outcome reflects the prose *novella* by Matteo Bandello which is usually regarded as Shakespeare's main Italian source, and reflects also the poem by Arthur Brooke which translated that *novella* into English. But other uses had been made of this story which were theatrical, and not just narratives on the page. The same fictional events were dramatised by Luigi Groto in 1578 as an Italian tragedy, with the title of *Hadriana* (see Groto 1578).[14] Groto's play contains most of the essential features found in Bandello and in Shakespeare, including the tragic ending; though the story is set in a very different pseudo-historical time and place. However, Shakespeare's play contains many elements which (in terms of typical Italian dramaturgy of this period) would be equally at home in a comedy, including the family structure which has been mentioned above; and it is easy to imagine a version of the story with a happy ending. It is only necessary for the letter sent by Friar Lawrence to be delivered to Romeo, instead of failing to reach him by some implausibly bad luck. In that case he would wake Juliet in her tomb; they could elope together; and their union would then perhaps help to make peace between the Montague and Capulet families. An Italian *commedia grave* (serious comedy) with such a story would appear entirely normal, in the decade of the 1590s.

14 *La Hadriana* [or *Adriana*] was reprinted nine more times, to 1626, a fact which denotes an unusual level of reader interest.

In two scenarios of his 1611 collection, Flaminio Scala uses a central theatergram from *Romeo and Juliet*: a heroine deliberately drinks a potion which makes her appear to be dead, and hopes that this stratagem will help her to be reunited with her lover. (In fact this trope is a very common one: it recurs also in a number of the manuscript scenario collections which survive from the 17th century). Both of Scala's relevant scenarios are comedies, which end with the marriage of the couple concerned; and in both cases the pretended death provides the beginning of the dramatic action, rather than its climax. The swallowing of the potion, and the heroine's burial, belong to the antefact of these plays: the lady is already in her tomb when the action begins.

Scala's seventh scenario is called *La creduta morta* (The Woman Believed Dead);[15] and the woman who has pretended to die is Flaminia, one of the two *Innamorata* masks who appear throughout Scala's collection. In 1.2 we see Flaminia's family performing a mourning ceremony after her burial. But her lover Orazio knows what she has done, and knows that she is really alive. Early in Act 1, Orazio and his servant Pedrolino are making plans to lift Flaminia out of her tomb with ropes; but in Scene 13 of the same Act Flaminia comes on to the stage, having already escaped from the cemetery. For much of the rest of the play, other characters repeatedly think they are seeing Flaminia's ghost, and run away from her in panic; and this happens often enough to give the play a farcical tone. In the end, as is proper for the comic genre, Orazio and Flaminia are married.

Scala's no. 18, *Li tragici successi* (The Tragic Events)[16] resembles *Romeo and Juliet* more closely, because it involves also the situation of a feud between two families. The explanatory *Argomento* placed at the beginning of the text begins as follows: –

> Si ritrovavano già abitar in Fiorenza duo gentiluomini di portata, i quali, da lunghissimo odio stimolati, l'uno dell'altro con sommo desiderio ogni travaglio bramando, piú l'interna nemicizia augumentavano. Pantalone chiamavasi l'uno, l'altro Graziano, tutti duo di virtuosa famiglia dotati.

15 This text is not included in Andrews 2008.

16 Text and commentary in Andrews 2008, 106-13.

> [There were once living in Florence two gentlemen of quality, who were moved by a long-standing mutual hatred, and each one of them fervently desiring to bring trouble to the other, they continually nourished their civil enmity. One of them was called Pantalone, the other Graziano, both of them blessed with families of high reputation.]

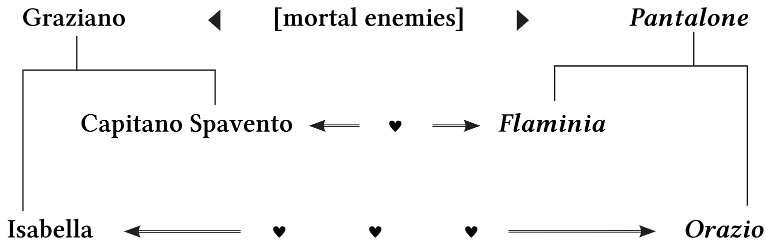
Already, just on the strength of that paragraph, we can suspect that the tone of this play is going to be rather different from Shakespeare's tragedy, at least for some of the time – because the *commedia dell'arte* figures of Pantalone and Dottor Graziano were not associated with tragic dignity. The way in which those masks habitually expressed their feelings, in caricatured Venetian and Bolognese dialects, made it hard for an audience to take those feelings seriously. Their expressions of anger, in particular, were normally grotesque, and provoked laughter. The only confrontation between the two, in 1.6, makes this quite clear: it is described thus: –

> Pantalone con lanterne accese, vede Graziano armato; fanno spasseggiate da bravo poi si dicono villanie; e tutti via.

> [Pantalone with lanterns lit, sees Graziano armed; they parade in front of each other in tough-guy style and then insult each other; and all exit.]

So although this scenario does contain some scenes of high drama and some monologues of desperation delivered by the young lovers, there will be other moments involving these two old men, or involving Pedrolino and Arlecchino, which will be firmly comic in tone. This technique of combining upper-class pathos with lower-class comedy is more similar in Shakesepearean terms to *Much Ado About Nothing* than to *Romeo and Juliet*; but in any case published plays with such a mixture of registers were common in Italy towards the end of the sixteenth century.

Scala's *Argomento* for *Li tragici successi* continues to remind us of *Romeo and Juliet*; and it is perhaps helpful to show the essential relationships in diagrammatic form, with italics to differentiate Pantalone's family from Graziano's:



This shows how in his scenario Flaminio Scala was obliged to use two pairs of lovers, because every professional Italian company contained two male *Innamorati* and two female *Innamorate*. Before the play begins, in antefact again, Graziano's son Capitano Spavento, has fallen in love with Pantalone's daughter Flaminia. Because of the family feud, Pantalone's son Orazio has attacked and seriously wounded the Capitano, and so is banished from the city (as Romeo is banished for killing Tybalt). And in fact it is Orazio who is our 'Romeo' figure; because he is also in love with Isabella, the daughter of the enemy house. He writes letters to her from exile, and eventually (like Romeo) decides to come back to his city in secret. Scala's opening Argument continues:

> Nel qual tempo Isabella, non potendo meno lei sofferire l'amoroso ardore, col mezzo d'un medico presa una bevanda sonnifera, finse esser morta, per poi dal sepolcro uscire, et andare a ritrovare il suo caro Orazio. E ciò in un medesimo giorno avvenne, tanto dell'arrivo d'Orazio, quando della finta morte d'Isabella.

> [At that point Isabella, no more able than he was to endure the pains of love, took a sleeping draught with the help of a physician and pretended to be dead, in order then to come out of her tomb and go and find her beloved Orazio. And all this happened on the same day, both Orazio's arrival and Isabella's pretended death.]

In this scenario – as in Shakespeare, but in contrast to Scala's other scenario *La creduta morta* – the lover Orazio does not know that Isabella's death is a pretence. In 1.7, Orazio goes away to mourn over her tomb; but as soon as he has gone, Isabella herself appears on stage. In 2.3, she comes to an inn dressed as a man, intending to leave the city in disguise. In 2.5 Orazio appears and fails to recognise her at first, but then they have their joyful reunion scene – a repertoire

number for which professional actors were well prepared to supply their own text, and which in the scenario is designated by the single word 'allegro'. In the end Orazio "la piglia di peso e la porta in casa" (picks her up bodily and carries her indoors), to a room inside the inn. The action of 'pigliare di peso' is a recurrent physical *lazzo* which in other Scala scenarios is performed by the comic servants Arlecchino and Pedrolino. Later, however, Orazio is arrested by the Florentine police for returning from his banishment: Isabella follows him, intending to die at his side. Eventually she obtains her father's forgiveness, marries Orazio, and the family feud is brought to an end.

The disasters faced in this same scenario by the other pair of *Innamorati*, Flaminia and Capitano Spavento (see the diagram above), bear no relationship at all to the *Romeo and Juliet* story: they involve the Capitano being sentenced to death, and led along the streets to his execution. But since the scenario is labelled 'commedia', he too is eventually pardoned and allowed to marry Flaminia.

The surface similarities between this plot and *Romeo and Juliet* cannot, of course, make Scala's 1611 scenario a textual 'source' for Shakespeare's play which is usually dated around 1595. Shakespeare will never have known this version of the story, not even in a hypothetical earlier scribbled form which Scala may have adapted for his printed collection. He could, however, have heard of Groto's *Hadriana*. What can be said is that elements of the narrative plot, perhaps found first in Bandello's *novella* (Book 2, no. 9) published in 1554, had also become commonplace units used by Italian dramatists. The Scala scenarios tell us that the story of Romeo and Juliet was perceived as a collection of theatergrams which could be recycled separately or in combination, and which could be used equally well in tragedy or in comedy. This was certainly the attitude of professional theatre practitioners in Italy. The device of a potion which makes one appear to be dead is used on its own, adapted to many different narrative contexts, by several early *commedia dell'arte* scenarios in a variety of genres.[17] My

17 For the frequent use of feigned death as a plot device in scripted *commedia grave*, see Marrapodi 2011.

argument is that English dramatists too had reason to see this tale as possessing theatrical potential, even a theatrical identity, and so it was for them a common resource. The non-dramatic versions – Bandello's prose *novella* and Arthur Brooke's poem – cannot be seen as Shakespeare's only inspiration.

In order to press this argument, when quoting Flaminio Scala in particular, it is important to explain the significance, or rather the non-significance, of publication dates. The fact that Flaminio Scala's *Teatro delle Favole Rappresentative* was printed in 1611 is irrelevant for the kind of inquiry I am now conducting. The same is true of the two major manuscript collections of Italian scenarios, one dated around 1620 and the other between 1620 and 1640. The date at which theatergrams were inscribed on various pages, whether by a printer or by a pen, tells us nothing about when the material was created. On the contrary, the appearance of a scenario in Scala's volume actually demonstrates that this scenario, or other dramatic versions of what it contains, had already existed for some time; and the same is true, for example, of any *canovaccio* collected by Basilio Locatelli in his manuscript volumes dated 1618 and 1622. These books have a retrospective function: they are assemblages of items which were already in the professional repertoire. The scenarios could not have been put in those collections if they had not already been used many times by *commedia dell'arte* troupes. And this fact is made even more clear by the number of theatergrams contained in these volumes which originate in scripted plays from much earlier decades. I have mentioned *La Pellegrina*, performed and published in 1589 but composed at least twenty years before this; and the tragedy *Hadriana* which dates from 1574.

One of the most insistently popular storylines was that of the heroine who disguises herself as a boy in order to win back an unfaithful lover. This motif appeared in prose and verse narrative, in several languages; but its launching on the comic stage occurred in the anonymous Sienese play *Gl'ingannati* (The Deceived) first performed in 1532 and printed in 1537. *Gl'ingannati* has long been recognised as the source for a series of adaptations that led to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The Sienese comedy contains separate or separable elements of plot which are re-used, in various combinations, in seven

different scenarios by Flaminio Scala[18] – but before that, they had already become a 'common resource' for Humanist playwrights, and been used in a number of published Italian comedies between 1540 and 1600. The pool of material had accumulated in Italy well before the careers of either Shakespeare or Scala.

In addition, our attention cannot be limited to the comic genre. Despite our modern anachronistic name for them, *commedia dell'arte* actors were not exclusively concerned with 'commedia', but also with other types of drama. Our second detailed example can be the narrative framework of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.[19]

One of the most obstinate myths about *The Tempest*, at least among English-speaking commentators, is that it is the single one of Shakespeare's plays that possesses no narrative source. It is still regularly claimed that Shakespeare himself invented this whole story out of nothing. Even in recent years, this has been stated as fact in programme notes for productions of the play in England.[20] In fact nothing could be further from the truth. Reputable scholars have been trying to show us otherwise throughout the twentieth century, starting with Ferdinando Neri in 1913, and continuing to the present day.[21] What I say now therefore makes no claims to originality; but it seems that there still exists a barricade of resistance, among Shakespeare scholars, which needs to be broken down by repeated assaults.

The Tempest is in fact a variant on a narrative template which was very familiar on the Italian stage by the time Shakespeare made use of it. The play contains situations and relationships which, if we reduce them to their most essential components, had often been repeated. We have a fictional realm – often, but not always, an island – located far from the rest of civilisation. It is ruled by a person (usually male, but sometimes female) who possesses magical powers; and it includes among its inhabitants incorporeal

18 Days 10, 14, 16, 25, 26, 30, and 39 in Scala 1611. See my analysis in Andrews 2008, 34-6.

19 Much of what remains of this article repeats, in briefer form, parts of no. 14 in this volume. I retain the paragraphs which now follow, however, because they focus more exclusively on Flaminio Scala.

20 See footnote 1 in essay no. 14 in this volume.

21 See footnote 3 in essay no. 14 in this volume.

superhuman spirits on the one hand, and subhuman satyrs or Wild Men on the other. Various human characters make an involuntary entrance into this territory. If it is an island, they are cast on to its shores by shipwreck. Some of these characters perform in a pastoral tragi-comic tone, and are to be taken seriously by the audience: others are more farcical comic masks. The problems which they all bring with them are resolved by the powers of the Magician who rules the country: his methods often involve his taking control of individuals, and imposing upon them temporary transformations of bodily form or identity, or even temporary insanity. At the end, the visitors are all sent back to their own countries, satisfied or not with the outcome of their story. In some cases the Magician himself (or herself) may also have a past story, an antefact, which needs resolving; and it is also possible that his (or her) magic powers may be removed by the end of the play.

The fact that such plays make use of a rural setting, rather than an urban street or a palace, was enough for them usually to be labelled as pastoral dramas; and in fact the magical transformations which they contained had initially been introduced on to the Italian stage in the context of a mythical Arcadia governed by classical (or at least non-Christian) deities. Italian pastoral plays date from earlier than any *commedia dell'arte* scenario which we know; though there are short epistolary accounts of relevant, possibly improvised, performances in Mantua by two professional companies in the summer of 1567. For this large-scale plot theatergram, therefore, we can assume that material which appears in surviving texts had actually existed and been used for some time previously. In 1581 we see the publication of a *dramma pastorale* in five acts entitled *Gl'intricati* by Luigi Pasqualigo, which contains many of the features summarised above. The Maga in this case is female; the 'serious' characters are traditional nymphs and shepherds; the comic characters are Dottor Graziano, a peasant (*Villano*), and a Spanish soldier (Pasqualigo 1581).

Even more relevant to our present discussion of improvised theatre in particular is the pastoral *Fiammella*, published in Paris in 1584 by Bartolomeo Rossi (see Rossi 1584). Rossi was a *commedia dell'arte* actor and *capocomico*. From 1584 to 1585, his company was resident in Paris, and the publication of the play was part of

a publicity drive in his competition with other Italian troupes. (His most important competitor was the actor Tristano Martinelli, who was also in Paris at that moment, appropriating the French figure of the demonic Hellekin and transforming it into the stage mask of Arlecchino). In *Fiammella*, the characters manipulated by the Mago (a male figure this time) include again a set of traditional amorous nymphs and shepherds, but also Pantalone, Graziano, and the servant mask Bergamino. In this story, the Mago is in the end deprived of his magic powers and condemned to perpetual ignorance, in a judgement by a legal tribunal consisting of Jupiter, Pluto, Neptune and the Furies. Granted the status of Bartolomeo Rossi as an improvising professional, we can assume that this play is a fully scripted version of shows performed in various other versions by his own company. There are other later examples of troupe leaders who chose to re-write improvised material into a literary form, in order to show that their type of theatre could claim cultural respectability. We have already mentioned Flaminio Scala's transcription into five Acts of his own scenario, *Il marito*, between 1611 and 1618.

In Flaminio Scala's collection, there are two scenarios which make use of similar theatergrams, and which therefore offer echoes of *The Tempest*. In Day 43, a 'Royal drama' entitled *Alvida*,[22] some implausible complex relationships between kings, princes and princesses are resolved in a forest placed in a legendary Egypt. There are many magical special effects in this play, controlled by a Mago who lives alone in the forest. The Mago, like Shakespeare's Prospero, lived formerly in a royal court, and towards the end of the play (in 3.18) he is given a chance to explain who he is: –

> Mago inchina il Re d'Egitto, al quale dice essere il suo antico Ministro della religione, che, prevedendo molti strani avvenimenti nella sua Corte, si diede alle selve per rimediar a tutti i disordini, e dove apprese l'arte magica ancora, solo per giovare e non per nuocere altrui . . .
>
> [The Mago bows before the King of Egypt, and tells him that he is his former High Priest who, foreseeing many strange happenings in his Court, took to the woods in order to find remedies for all the

22 Text and commentary in Andrews 2008, 290-9.

> disturbances. There he learned the magic arts, but only to do good and not harm . . .]

This Mago is therefore a disinterested helper: he has no previous relationships with the central characters, and certainly has no scores to settle like those of Prospero. We can note, though, that this gives us an Italian model in which a powerful magical manipulator is given a past history in the ordinary world.

The other Scala scenario which has a clear relevance to *The Tempes*t is the penultimate one in the volume: Day 49, *L'arbore incantato* (The Magic Tree).[23] This is the only scenario which Scala labels as a 'pastoral'. The setting is the traditionally vague one of 'Arcadia'; and this time we are not on an island or other isolated territory, and there are no new arrivals cast on a shore by shipwreck. However, this Arcadia, unlike the real Greek region of that name, seems to be placed near a sea coast (like Shakespeare's Bohemia): the scenic effects described include an enormous sea-shell (*cappa marina*) rising out of the ground. The inhabitants include a magician named Sabino, who controls the action with the help of various 'Spirits' and of his servant the Wild Man (*Salvatico*). The lower-class residents of Arcadia include Pedrolino and Arlecchino.

In all these Italian examples, both scripted and improvised, similarities to *The Tempest* can only be taken so far. When Shakespeare borrows other people's stories and models, he always invests them with more tension and significance. Prospero's interventions against the shipwrecked courtly characters, who include his own brother and the King of Naples, relate to a story of political treachery, and to themes of punishment and forgiveness, which cannot be traced to any of the texts which we have quoted. In most of the Italian plays, by contrast, the 'serious' part of the plot just narrates the love affairs of nymphs and shepherds, in very conventional pastoral style: in that respect, they resemble *A Midsummer Night's Dream* more than they do *The Tempest*. However, we are dealing in all cases with the repetitive use of a typical cast of characters. The Mago is a model for Prospero; his 'Spirits' have the same function as Ariel; a Satyr or a Wild Man recalls Caliban, though in this case the figure is more of

23 Text and commentary in Andrews 2008, 311-19.

a collaborative servant than a resentful slave. The farcical *commedia dell'arte* masks, always obsessed with eating and drinking, resemble Shakespeare's drunkards Stephano and Trinculo. Prospero's defeat of these comic characters carries strong echoes of the dénouement, not of Scala's scenarios, but of *Gl'intricati* of 1581 by Pasqualigo, mentioned above. Both in *Gl'intricati* and in *Fiammella* of 1584, the clowns are told very firmly that they should accept their low social status, and renounce any pretensions – especially amorous designs on the local nymphs – which belong to the gentlemanly class. Stephano and Trinculo, of course, show similar upstart ambitions in attempting to take command of Prospero's island; and Caliban has ambitions to seduce or rape Miranda. *Gl'intricati* is the earliest of our Italian analogues, composed and published when Shakespeare was only seventeen years old. This date alone shows that patterns of dramatic narrative on which Shakespeare could have drawn in order to create *The Tempest* existed in Italy before the English author had written anything at all.

I must repeat the basic premise, that any material which appeared on Flaminio Scala's pages in 1611 had been created earlier than that year. Traditional textual criticism cannot in fact tell us very much about how theatrical resources were exchanged and copied, often across national and linguistic boundaries, in the early modern period. This fundamental point, I would propose, must always be taken into account when inquiring into the sources used by Shakespeare, and indeed by any other English dramatist of the Tudor and Stuart periods. We cannot confine ourselves to placing written and printed texts in chronological order, and deciding that the earlier ones can be seen as 'sources' for the later ones. The methods of textual criticism, attempts to trace individual sources for individual texts, are useless to us here; because this material would never have been found in a single place, and was not preserved in any documents which could survive for us. But we have to give great importance to the fact that theatre professionals carried verbal and scenic material in their heads, and that they had no scruples at all about copying it, re-using it, effectively stealing it. This after all is known to be the procedure by which *commedia dell'arte* improvising actors created their personal stage repertoires; and we have given enough examples already to show that the same

methods were used by the actor-managers of troupes when they structured plots for scenarios. We know this was done constantly in Italy: there is no reason to suppose that other parts of Europe were any different. Italian troupes may not have visited England much after the decade of the 1570s – they were probably kept out, as much as anything, by what we should now describe as trade union protectionism (which included a strong prejudice against the use of female performers). Nevertheless, their material would be remembered enough to be copied; and the travelling Englishmen who saw them abroad in later years included itinerant actors as well as men of letters.

Altogether, the echoes which I have found between Shakespeare and Flaminio Scala do not occur because Shakespeare was a source for Scala, nor because Scala was a source for Shakespeare. The resources which they have in common belong to a stock of theatergrams which were common property, and which circulated in ephemeral form or in no written form at all. The pattern to bear in mind is not one of 'the transmission of texts', but rather that of an amorphous pool of plot elements internationally available to everyone, and constantly drawn on for recycling and re-interpretation. These elements include standard narrative roles (desperate lovers, faithful or unfaithful servants, ineffective patriarchs, commanding magicians . . .); and also standard types of action which those characters can pursue (adopting false identity, taking fake poison, casting transformative spells, pursuing inappropriate objects of love or lust . . .). A 'morphology', I could argue, analogous to that of folk tales, as set out in the classic study of Vladimir Propp.[24] (Conflicts between parents and offspring, daughters and stepdaughters who defy or evade repressive fathers, are as common in folk tales as they are in early modern stage plays; and there is no reason why motifs and patterns from folklore should not have spilled over into the theatre). In modern popular drama, nowadays offered chiefly on television, a similar morphology

24 Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale* was published in Russian in 1928: see Propp 1968 for the English translation by Laurence Scott. Parallels with the structuring of *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, using Flaminio Scala as an example, have been proposed in a thesis published in Czech by Kateřina Bohadlová (see Bohadlová 2005). The Czech text is followed by a 10-page summary in Italian.

might well be detected: there is a methodology here which tends to be pursued, consciously or unconsciously, by all producers of performed fiction who need to come up with a regular supply of material. In slightly differing but related contexts, such a need would have been felt equally by English and Italian professionals in the years around 1600.

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16

The Italian *Comici*, and *Commedia dell'Arte*

> The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men. (*Hamlet*, 2.2)

This much-quoted actors' publicity brochure, delivered orally by Polonius, is applied in *Hamlet* to a fictional group of touring players who are not presented as hailing from Italy. Nevertheless, at least two modern anglophone scholars have already used the phrase "the law of writ and the liberty" as a peg on which to hang their descriptions of Italian professional companies in the 16th and 17th centuries. Both Louise George Clubb and Michael Anderson have seen the expression 'the law of writ' as referring to the performance of scripts learned by heart; while 'the liberty' is seen as indicating the famously Italian practice of improvisation on a scenario (Clubb 1989, 249-80; Anderson 1995, 189-99). (We shall see that the word 'improvisation', granted the baggage of associations which it carries from modern drama schools, may have to be used with some caution). Clubb and Anderson are making the point that Italian professional troupes were indiscriminately capable of delivering both memorized scripts and devised scenarios, and that it is anachronistic for theatre historians to treat the practice of actors' improvisation as if it were somehow fenced off from other methods of performance, in a world of its own. The mention of a range of tones stretching from Seneca to Plautus also reflects the repertoire of Italian companies. The term *comici* which denotes simply 'actors' – and the much later expression *commedia dell'arte* – should not be translated into an assumption that Italian players interpreted only 'comedy', generically defined. The fictional company, whose

nationality we do not know, is prepared in its visit to fictional Elsinore to cover a full gamut of dramatic genres, including the bloodthirsty "Murder of Gonzago", alias *The Mousetrap*. The same flexibility was deployed by groups such as the Gelosi, the Confidenti, the Uniti and the Fedeli, who built such a reputation touring Italy, France and Spain. Shakespeare may not have had Italian examples in mind; but whether he did or not, Polonius's speech now provides scholars with an irresistible set of tags which accurately summarise the activities of those internationally famous troupes.

The task of this essay is to explain how professional Italian *comici* operated and what they performed, drawing on accounts offered by the most recent scholarship. The purpose is to enable readers of English Tudor and Stuart plays to make reliable judgements about the extent to which these troupes did, or indeed did not, influence English drama.

For some time, scholars working in English used to gain their picture of Italian improvised theatre from two large-scale (and large-format) publications dating from the early 20th century: Allardyce Nicoll's *The World of Harlequin*, and *The Italian Comedy* translated from the French of Pierre Louis Duchartre (Nicoll 1963; Duchartre 1929). The material offered there, and its interpretation, are derived from the first wave of '*commedia dell'arte* scholarship' which arose in France in the 19th century. In the light of work done since by Italian scholars (most of which has not been translated),[1] those surveys now appear as incomplete or selective: they are also heavily slanted towards a romanticized view, over-influenced by what is known about Italian actors in France in the 17th and 18th centuries, rather than by their initial period of creative innovation which dates from around 1550-1630. In English, more recently, a much more balanced account has been provided by Kenneth and Laura Richards (1990); and important ground has been broken, regarding the methodology of improvisation and the structure of recited texts,

1 The most ground-breaking studies are listed here, in chronological order: Taviani and Schino 1982; Molinari 1985; Marotti and Romei 1991; Ferrone 1985/6; Ferrone 1993. Also other works by Ferdinando Taviani, Roberto Tessari, and Delia Gambelli. For textual material, see Pandolfi 1957.

by Tim Fitzpatrick and Robert Henke (1995; 2002).[2] More attention has also been paid to the choices made by Italian professionals regarding what kind of plots they chose to dramatize, as exemplified by the extensive collections of scenarios which survive from the period (Andrews 2008). However, the picture painted by Duchartre and Nicoll, and indeed the painted or engraved pictures of actors which they selected for reproduction,[3] have created for anglophone historians and practitioners of theatre a somewhat one-sided view of *commedia dell'arte*, from which it is time to move on.

We could start by pointing out that the term *commedia dell'arte* is a late coinage by scholars. In a play of 1750 the Italian dramatist Goldoni referred to 'commedie dell'arte' in the plural, meaning 'plays mounted by the professionals' of that time.[4] This is the first documented appearance of such an expression. Shifting the plural 'commedie' to the singular 'commedia', to designate a whole theatrical genre or practice, was a critical convenience which is now too well entrenched to be easily abandoned, but it has no basis in any usage from the time when this form of theatre was being created. The companies of *comici* who functioned in the period around 1600 are the forerunners of those that Goldoni knew, but they were significantly different in many ways.

The word 'arte' is at least accurate in denoting professionality (the word, among other meanings, denotes an Italian trade 'guild', and also an artisan 'craft'); and there is no doubt that the phenomenon we are discussing, whatever we then call it, was created by professional Italian companies. The first surviving notarial document regarding the constitution of such a group dates from 1545, in Padua.[5] This contract lists no women performers: the first one which does so, and which is still extant, is from 1564. The emergence of the actress in Italy was to have a major seminal effect on the whole of European or 'western' culture: Vincenza Armani and Isabella Andreini paved the way, however distantly, for

2 A recent study which also deserves attention is Jordan 2014.

3 On the question of visual evidence, see the revisionist views introduced in Katritzky 2006.

4 See Goldoni 1750, 1.2. There are numerous modern editions of this play.

5 The text of this document is translated in Richards and Richards 1990, 44-6.

Sarah Bernhardt, Maria Callas and Marilyn Monroe. In a historical context, though, it is difficult now to trace how and when female performers first appeared. It is even harder to explain why they were accepted, granted the huge social prejudices which existed against women 'exposing themselves' in public in any performance which claimed cultural or social respectability. Nevertheless, we read from archived correspondence that in 1567 the Duchy of Mantua was visited by two competing theatre companies, both including women: one was directed by an actress whose stage name was 'Flaminia', and the other run jointly by a 'Pantalone' (possibly Giulio Pasquati) and the actress Vincenza Armani. The artistic and commercial rivalry between the groups was made more interesting for the public by the fact that each leading lady was being courted by a different aristocratic patron – it is reported that the whole city was divided between fans of Flaminia and of Vincenza. As well as mounting improvised comic scenarios, each woman is mentioned as starring in a more serious play, one based on the Virgilian story of Dido and the other taken from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (Molinari 1985, 74; see also Nicholson 1999).[6] By the 1560s, then, professional touring companies were an established fact of life in northern Italy, and women were among their major star attractions. The episode also confirms that *commedia dell'arte* companies did not restrict their repertoire to what Frank Kermode has referred to as "jocose pantomime" (Kermode 1975, 67); the Dido story could only be treated tragically, and the one derived from Ariosto, however mixed in tone, would involve a serious love story. In fact these dramas seem to linger more in the memory of the Mantuan correspondents of 1567 than do any strictly comic shows.

In fact it is now being argued that the presence of actresses was instrumental in moving the content of Italian improvised theatre up market and away from unbroken scurrility, introducing more demanding levels of rhetoric and emotional display (Henke 2002, 86-106). If English actors preferred to believe the opposite, and to see Italian actresses as mountebank whores, their conservatism was probably professional as well as moral: they wanted to denigrate and

6 This episode is discussed by Cesare Molinari on the basis of archived correspondence.

exclude what could have been dangerous competition. We know, of course, that they succeeded in keeping actresses off the English stage until the Restoration. In terms of historical origins, though, Tudor and Stuart propaganda may have had a point. The most persuasive theory now offered about who the first Italian actresses were, and how they joined the profession, is that they were recruited from the ranks of high-class courtesans ('cortegiane oneste') who trained themselves to entertain gentlemanly clients with a sophisticated combination of talents including musical proficiency and the ability to improvise courtly verse (Taviani and Schino 1982, 331-4). The actress Isabella Andreini (1562-1604) made huge efforts to counter this image, and to establish herself as a cultural and social icon beyond reproach – poetess, member of an Academy, virtuous wife and mother. She was successful in convincing a wide public in France as well as in Italy (to the extent of being granted a civic funeral in Lyon, where she died of a miscarriage while on tour); but her reputation does not seem to have crossed the English Channel.[7]

There were two central features in the methodology of Italian professional *comici*: the use of fixed stereotypical roles (some of which, but not all, were characterised by facial masks); and the technique of constructing a performance which we now refer to as 'improvisation'.[8] Both of these raise questions regarding their possible influence on, or transference into, English theatre.

Most Italian actors specialised in playing one single stereotyped role in the course of a career; and many of them were better known by the name of their stage character than by the name with which they were baptised. Despite my insistence on the broad generic repertoire of Italian professional *comici*, it is clear that the composition of a company was structured around the casting needs of comic plots in particular. A fully constituted troupe would include two male lovers (*Innamorati*); two female lovers (*Innamorate*); at least two specialists in different roles of old comic fathers (*Vecchi*);

7 On Isabella, see Andrews 2000 and 2013, now essays nos. 9 and 10 in the present volume. For a revised view of English reactions to actresses, see now Brown 2021.

8 For a more extended version of what now follows, see the Introduction to Andrews 2008, 18-45.

two comic male servants (*Servi*); and one braggart *Capitano*. A female servant figure eventually also became common, though initially these were often played by a male actor: what the French later called the *soubrette* role for an actress was perhaps slowly becoming established after 1600. Actors playing the Lovers, of both sexes, initially chose a stage name which they hoped would not be re-used: Orazio, Flavio, Lelio, Fulvio, and many others, each trying to present themselves as unique male personalities; as did Flaminia, Isabella, Lidia, Valeria, and so on, among the women. In non-comic dramas, they then took on whatever name was prescribed by an existing plot; so Isabella Andreini developed her trade-mark 'mad scenes' using the name Isabella in comedies, but would use the same material under other names (such as, in one case, Alvira)[9] in tragedy. The same was true of braggart Captains: each actor taking such a role would invent for himself a ludicrous name such as Spavento ('Terror'), Matamoros ('Moor-Slayer'), or Coccodrillo ('Crocodile'), and the title 'Capitano' was attached to all of them. It is well known, though, that the names of the most familiar farcical roles – the term *parti ridicole* was expressly attached at the time to the old fathers and the comic servants – began to be passed from one actor to another, over a number of generations. The names and characters which survived for longest among the old patriarchs were the caricature Venetian merchant Pantalone (originally called simply by the Venetian honorific title 'il Magnifico'), and the pseudo-learned Dottor Graziano. Female servants were often called Franceschina: the name Colombina became popular much later. Among the male servants there were variations on the name Zan or Zanni (a northern dialect form for Giovanni), together with the well-defined roles of Pedrolino, Brighella, Scapino, Scaramuccia, and eventually Arlecchino. It is worth noting (though the fact may have limited relevance for studies of Tudor and Stuart theatre) that the name Arlecchino or Harlequin was not especially well known in Italy around the year 1600: at that time the role belonged solely to the single actor who was still developing it, Tristano Martinelli (1557-

9 This clearly established example is the tragic scenario *La forsennata principessa* ("The Demented Princess"), which is no. 41 in Flaminio Scala's printed collection of 1611. See Andrews 2008, 264-73.

1630).[10] The days when Italian improvised theatre could rightly be called 'The World of Harlequin' were still in the future: they arose very much from the success of Italian actors playing the role in Paris in the 17th and 18th centuries. Martinelli had in fact created his stage personality in Paris in the 1580s, adapting a diabolic figure named Hellekin from French and northern European folk legend: the figure is perhaps most familiar now as the Erlkönig, explored in verse by Goethe and in music (among others) by Schubert.[11]

Later in the seventeenth century, the entry into the genre of comic figures such as Coviello, Tartaglia, and especially Pulcinella (Polichinelle in French, Mr Punch in English), signalled a greater participation by actors and stereotyped figures from the southern half of Italy, especially Naples. The regional provenance of the more comic figures was in fact a central part of the Italian *arte* experience, because each of them used a specific local accent or dialect as one of their most important identifying badges. Before the arrival of Pulcinella, most of the varieties of speech used were from north of the Appenines. Pantalone spoke in Venetian; the Dottore in Bolognese mixed with bad Latin; most of the servants (eventually) in a mocking version of peasant dialect from the valleys round Bergamo; and the earliest Capitani had a heavy Spanish accent. The fact that the Lovers of both sexes spoke academic literary Italian (or 'Tuscan'), and deployed the full force of Petrarchan and Platonic rhetoric, distinguished their roles even more sharply from the *parti ridicole*. All these stylized speech registers remained unchanged in Italian troupes until the eighteenth century and beyond. They were a feature which would have more difficulty in crossing linguistic frontiers. Nevertheless, mockery of strange accents (by both writers and performers) is common to all comic theatre; and one cannot exclude the possibility of some English dramatists noting what the Italians were doing, as well as following their own existing stereotypes. With regard to Shakespeare one could speculate about Dogberry; but most of all about Dr Caius in *The Merry Wives*, with

10 There is now a full Italian biography of Martinelli in Ferrone 2006.

11 A 14th-century French miniature depicts Hellekin pushing a cart full of the souls of dead children – it is reproduced in Testaverde 2003, 17. Goethe's Erlkönig steals the soul of a boy from his father's arms.

his caricatured French. His personality in other respects is a fusion of two Italian roles: a Dottore and a Capitano.

The more detailed characteristics of Italian fixed 'masks' (whether they were physically masked or not) were inseparable from the roles they were likely to play in a typical comic plot.

The derisive targeting of miserly or lustful old fathers derives ultimately from Plautus – from the sort of intrigue which inspired the earliest fully scripted Humanist comedies in Italian (*commedie erudite*), and then passed seamlessly into scenarios for improvisation. In such stories, the main function of an older man was to be a 'blocking' character against the amorous ambitions of his son, and to be comprehensively tricked and defeated by his scheming slave. In Italian scenarios, Pantalone and Dottor Graziano are very often victims in a similar fashion. Some more moralistic Italian critics disapproved of this tendency to mock the patriarch figure whose authority was the bedrock of social hierarchies. Improvising actors took little notice of this inhibition, because Pantalone and Graziano were popular with audiences; but such sensitivities may partly explain the relative infrequency of such characters on the English stage. Pantalone, in particular, tended to oppose his son in the battle of wits for one of just three reasons: because he was mean with his money; because of a knee-jerk desire to impose his patriarchal will; or because he had conceived an inappropriate lust for one of the young women in the plot, possibly the one whom his son wanted to marry.[12] The emphasis in the last case was on the unquestioning assumption, in this kind of comedy, that old men in love are by definition ridiculous: Pantalone (and also the Capitano) could be characterised by foolishly lovelorn soliloquies. Dottor Graziano too might fall into one of these traps; but his main function was to demonstrate, at great length, the complete failure of his pretensions to scholarly knowledge (which could be in fields literary, legal, or philosophical, more often than medical). The tirades of the greatest Dottori were strictly untranslatable, because they were made up of total nonsense: in stylised Bolognese dialect mixed with macaronic Latin, language and logic were torn apart and almost every word

12 Peter Jordan offers a close study of the Pantalone mask in Jordan 2014; especially Chapters 7-8.

replaced with a similar-sounding one, preferably with sexual or scatological overtones. Other characters on stage were reduced to exasperation – and spectators, by all accounts, to helpless laughter – at the sheer accumulation of gibberish. The Dottore was thus a 'blocking' character in a different sense: his speeches brought dramatic action to a halt, and his interlocutors had to silence him or get him off the stage.[13]

Braggart Capitani were also originally inspired by Plautus (the '*Miles gloriosus*' appears in more comedies than just the one which bears his name); though they then came to express a more topical Italian derision of occupying Spanish soldiers. A Capitano was full of lengthy bombast about his military prowess, but then when actually faced with a fight he either ran away or concocted an elaborate excuse. The bombast itself could be of various types. Extremely banal exploits could be recounted as though they were superhuman – the equivalent of the folk-tale formula of killing 'seven (flies) at one blow'. More often the claims made were in fact superhuman: he has devastated opposing armies single-handed, he has killed people with a frown or a glare. Isabella Andreini's husband Francesco was a Capitano: he published a collection of scenes and speeches from his personal repertoire in which, as often as not, he boasts of consorting with classical gods or abstract personifications in a world of complete fantasy (Andreini 1987).[14]

In terms of their function in the plot, the clownish servant characters of Italian improvised theatre were derived, via scripted *commedia erudita*, from the Plautine slave. From the start, though, there were some clear divergences. Servants in these comedies were indeed often cunning and tricky, devising elaborate deceptive plots against the patriarchs. However, in many cases their devices failed, or became irrelevant to the real dénouement: in written Humanist comedies, the proportion of successful to unsuccessful conspiracies by servants gives the impression of being about equal. When the

13 'Doctorial' tirades were published in Italy as collections of uncontextualised monologues. Their dramaturgical implications appear most clearly in a French example: the Docteur character in Molière's early farce *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* – see Andrews 1998, essay no. 11 in the present volume.

14 Andreini's *Le bravure del Capitano Spavento*, originally published in 1607, is edited now by Roberto Tessari.

professional masks took over, things were not very different. One reads much about a canonical division of roles between the cunning masterful *primo Zani* and the foolish *secondo Zani*; but in practice this distinction was often either blurred or not observed at all.[15]

As regards their character traits, these lower-class masks have tendencies which appear less often in English Renaissance drama. Italian stage servants were usually seen as peasants migrated into town, which explains the choice of country-bumpkin Bergamask as their preferred dialect. Their prevailing comic characteristics were therefore stupidity and verbal confusion; an obsession with food and drink, of which they felt permanently deprived; and a relaxed or predatory attitude to sex, which led them to make immediate advances to female servants. (Harpo Marx, pursuing young women at speed across the cinema screen, can be seen as a direct descendant). Over the decades there was a shift from verbal confusion to sharp verbal repartee, a move which happened at different speeds in different cases. In fact in all theatrical cultures the pronouncements of a stage clown attain an inconsistent balance between amusing idiocy and equally amusing wit. Female servants, or lower-class female characters in general, tend in Italian comedy to have a low threshold of sexual morality, whether pursued by Zani and Arlecchino or exploited by employers such as Pantalone. There is the clear impression that whereas the higher-class female Lovers have reputations to protect, for themselves and their families, plebeian Franceschina has no 'honour' to lose. Servants of both sexes can be found eavesdropping on lovers' conversations, and deriding the high-flown language and aspirations which they overhear: another example of the audience laughing in collusion with the clown, rather than at him.

The Lovers themselves played a central role in Italian improvised comedy: the fact that their verbal and emotional style is now so hard to appreciate has sometimes led historians to underestimate their

15 Statements about these sharply delineated roles first appear in the writings of the actor-manager Pier Maria Cecchini (1563-c.1645): these treatises attempt to impose his own practices, which were not necessarily accepted by others.

importance and their popularity with the public.[16] Surrounded by masks who expressed scurrility and idiocy in caricatured dialects, these male and female stars developed a repertoire based on the most elaborate and mannered expressions of Baroque literary language. They used this sometimes in order to play what we would characterise as straight 'love scenes'; but most often they performed dialogues of contrast, jealousy and misunderstanding, often involving a kind of stichomythia in which the rhetorical conceit of one interlocutor was developed or twisted by the other in symmetrical patterns. In addition, of course, stage Lovers delivered extended monologues of ecstasy or despair: their long tirades of desperation included the 'mad scenes' for which Isabella Andreini was particularly famous. If we perceive a tendency towards expressing pain rather than delight or affection, this simply depends on the need for their love to encounter obstacles (self-created, or imposed by others) in order to provide drama. We should then note, though, that there was a wide diversity of emotional tone in the stories performed. The same rhetoric could be applied to misunderstandings which were foolish and farcical, leaving the Lovers themselves as figures of fun; or to serious and painful emotional or moral dilemmas. (Shakespeare, with his perhaps unique complexity, managed to compose a play offering both of these tendencies, in *Much Ado About Nothing*). Isabella Andreini – whose personal range is unusually well documented in the published scenarios of Flaminio Scala – was clearly capable of covering the whole gamut. She sometimes appears as a commanding moral presence who imposes proper solutions on her wayward fellow-characters. In other plots, though, she can be a daughter pregnant out of wedlock; or a deceiving unfaithful wife; or a betrayed woman adopting male disguise to hunt down her lover. In fact the female lover disguised as a boy was an especially popular plot device: it was launched by scripted Humanist comedies composed in Siena in the 1530s and 1540s, including *Gl'ingannati* of 1532 which is accepted as a source for *Twelfth Night*. Male *Innamorati* in Italian plays could

16 An Italian scholar, introducing selected examples of stage lovers' rhetoric, has remarked that their role is the one "which remains most incomprehensible to us in its artistic significance" (Pandolfi 1957, 2.35).

also cover a wide range: fidelity or inconstancy, incompetence or cunning, moral integrity or downright treachery. We can only speculate on how each one of them did this while also retaining the single recognisable stage personality which was crucial for their success with the public. Perhaps a distant clue can be provided by the way in which modern Hollywood stars impose parameters on themselves and their choice of roles.

In fact the retention of an identifiable personality, which could be adapted to a wide range of dramatised stories and functions within a plot, lay at the centre of the artisan technique adopted and developed by Italian professional actors. The servant Pedrolino might sometimes be loyal to his master, sometimes treacherous; he might have the courage to take risks in one story, while at other moments show the comic cowardice usually associated with clowns and with the lower classes of society. This inconsistency – which might be perceivable even within a single play – did not matter, provided he did everything in a recognisably 'Pedrolino' manner. The stage personality was built on clear-cut external features: Pedrolino's style of bodily gesture, his costume, his mask – and most of all, his accent and his language. Some of these would be modified as the role was passed on from one actor to another; but a degree of consistency and continuity was essential for the mask to be recognised and accepted. The task of an actor playing Pedrolino, or Pantalone, was comparable to that faced in the twentieth century or even later by a 'Professor' who sets himself up on a British holiday beach to voice and manipulate the 'Mr Punch' puppet. He cannot be identical in every way to his rivals and predecessors; he may invent completely new stories with Mr Punch as protagonist; but there are certain key features – most of all, vocal features – which are indispensable. Another analogy can be found in silent film comedies of the early twentieth century. Charlie Chaplin's 'tramp' character was not always a tramp, and he fluctuated wildly between clumsiness and physical skill, between bravery and timidity – but for the viewer he was still always the same person. Then, when sound was introduced to the cinema, the three Marx Brothers characters added clear-cut voices and accents to their unchangeable caricatured faces and costumes, thus representing perhaps the last widely-known incarnation of the professional Italian approach to

performed comedy. (Except, of course, that Harpo's 'vocal style' was the absence of any voice at all). For the Lovers too, as far as we can now judge, it was essential to maintain a particular verbal register, even perhaps a particular level of rhetorical artifice, in order to play their parts acceptably. Here too we might conclude that actors in equivalent roles in Marx Brothers film comedies were doing a similar job: even if the romantic rhetoric was a little more low-key than in the seventeenth century, heroes and heroines made the same determined bid for audience sympathy by constantly saying the right things in the right stereotypical way.

The way in which Italian actors maintained the required consistency for their roles, in all performances, is linked to the most famous element in their methodology – what is now most commonly referred to as 'improvisation'. This technique was so clearly attributed to the Italian professionals as to be designated internationally just as 'Italian comedy', though words corresponding to 'improvised' or 'improvisation' were also used. In Italy itself, the process was most often called *recitare a soggetto* (with the memorisation of a pre-existing script designated as *premeditato*). The 'soggetto' was the plot or story which had been chosen for the performance, the outline of which is sometimes now preserved for us in scenario documents. The 'recitare', the words used to perform the 'soggetto', were supplied by the actors; which means that in the vast majority of cases those words cannot have survived textually. In professional or commercial terms, Italian *arte* companies simply dispensed with the services of a dramatist. The troupe leader (*capocomico*) would construct a new combination of existing plot relationships, storylines, scenic confrontations, and dénouements, and cobble them into a scenario. Most of the components would be filched from existing printed plays, from other scenarios performed previously, or from a growing stock of narrative units common to the whole profession and passed around by oral dissemination. Some of the individual scenarios created were successful enough to recur over two centuries, with minor adaptations, in a succession of different surviving collections. In all cases, on any given night, the version of the scenario performed had to be tailored to fit the cast available to the company at that moment. It was the job of each actor to come up with words which activated the scenario on

stage, and which matched stylistically the characteristics of her or his fixed role.

This, then, was indeed an actors' theatre as opposed to a dramatist's theatre. It was also a theatre of 'improvisation', but it is important to recognise exactly what that term meant at the time, and not to confuse it with techniques and ambitions which are implied by the same word today. For modern students and practitioners of theatre, including those taught by formalised schools such as that of Jacques Lecoq, improvisation is an attempt at constant innovation, a test of an actor's *ad hoc* creativity and inventiveness: the ideal outcome is a performance which will be substantially different every night.[17] From surviving evidence, it would seem that quite different techniques were adopted by Italian professional actors around 1600 – rather than *inventing* their speeches and dialogues afresh for every performance, they *repeated and recycled* suitable material which they had studied in advance, learned in many cases by heart, and incorporated into a personal repertoire. In order to equip themeselves, they read extensively, each actor soaking his or her brain in the verbal style and concepts which were suitable to the role they played. The following is an excerpt from an all-purpose seventeenth-century prologue, a virtuosic exercise composed to be attached to any comedy: the serving-maid Ricciolina gives the audience an idea of how her company collegues have prepared themselves behind the scenes:

> La matina la Signora mi chiama: «Olà Ricciolina, portami la innamorata Fiammetta, che voglio studiare». Pantalone mi domanda le *Lettere* del Calmo. Il Capitano le *Bravure* del Capitano Spavento. Il Zanni le *Astuzie* di Bertoldo, il *Fugilozio* e l'*Ore di*

17 I am indebted here to conversations with the actor Toby Jones, along with observations of his performances; and also to consultation with Peter Jordan. The Wikipedia account of the Lecoq method speaks of "nurturing the creativity of the performer" and of "encourag[ing] the student to keep trying new avenues of creative expression". Other modern teachers of *commedia dell'arte* technique have the same tendency. Simply learning suitable material by rote, and then recycling it with variations, is not as far as I am aware part of any modern acting method.

> *ricreazione*. Graziano le *Sentenze* dell'Erborenze e la *Novissima Poliantea*, Franceschina vuole la *Celestina* per imparare di far la ruffiana. Lo Innamorato vuol l'opere di Platone.
>
> [In the morning the Leading Lady summons me: «Hey, Ricciolina, bring me *Fiammetta* the lover, because I want to study». Pantalone wants Andrea Calmo's *Letters*. The Captain wants *The Tirades of Capitano Spavento*. Zani wants Bertoldo's *Witty Sayings*, the *Fuggilozio* [Fleeing Idleness], and the *Ore di Ricreazione* [Hours of Recreation]. Doctor Graziano wants the *Sentences* of the Erborenze, and the *Novissima Poliantea*, Franceschina wants the *Celestina*, to learn how to play the bawd. The Lover wants the works of Plato.][18]

The best Italian actors, therefore, based their artisan skills, which on the face of it might seem purely 'oral', firmly on 'literary' or at least printed sources; and a large part of what they delivered on stage was learned and repeated, rather than invented. They *supplied the text* for their performances – they adapted and organised it so that it delivered the events required by the scenario, expressed the required emotions, realised the required comic effects. Whether they *improvised text*, in any modern sense of the word, is a delicate

18 Domenico Bruni: *Prologhi, parte seconda* (Undated 17th-cent. ms. in the Brera Library, Milan); my translation. Not all the works alluded to are easily traceable – one of their publication dates puts the prologue's composition later than 1611. *Fiammetta* may be the 14th-century work by Boccaccio, full of the laments of an abandoned female lover. Andrea Calmo was the first person to perform a Pantalone-type mask: his published *Lettere* (1547) were a model of humorous invention in Venetian dialect. For Capitano Spavento, see Andreini 1987. The *Astuzie* of 'Bertoldo' (Giulio Cesare Croce) published in 1611, were a series of witty sayings attributed to an uneducated 'wise fool': the *Fuggilozio* of Tommaso Costa (1601), and the *Ore di ricreazione* (1568) of Ludovico Guicciardini, were similar collections. 'L'Erborenze' was one André de Rezende, who published a collection of Latin sayings in 1575. *La Novissima Poliantea* is as yet untraced. *La Celestina* was the early 16th-century Spanish story about an old bawd bringing two lovers together. The works of Plato would be seen as underwriting the 'Platonic' love relationships regularly celebrated in 16th-century literature and philosophy: in Italian translation they would provide both concepts and vocabulary for the more high-flown *Innamorati* parts.

question of semantics. In a treatise explaining his craft, the actor Nicolò Barbieri also underplays spontaneous invention, and highlights second-hand recycling:

> I comici studiano e si muniscono la memoria di gran farragine di cose, come sentenze, concetti, discorsi d'amore, rimproveri, disperazioni e delirii, per averli pronti all'occasioni . . . Non vi è buon libro che da loro non sia letto, né bel concetto che non sia da essi tolto, né descrizzione di cosa che non sia imitata, né bella sentenza che non sia colta, perché molto leggono e sfiorano i libri. Molti di loro traducono i discorsi delle lingue straniere e se ne adornano, molti inventano, imitano, amplificano. (Barbieri 1971, 23, 34)[19]

> [Actors study and fill their memories with a whole load of things – mottoes, conceits, speeches of love, reproaches, despairings and delirium, so as to have them ready for the occasion . . . There isn't a single good book that they haven't read, no fine conceit that they haven't taken, no formal description of anything that they haven't imitated, no fine epigram that they haven't gathered, because they're constantly reading and leafing through books. Many of them translate speeches from foreign languages and make them their own, many others invent, imitate, and amplify.]

The Italian scholar Siro Ferrone, quoting Ricciolina's prologue, emphasises in particular the complete absence, from this approach to acting and indeed to dramaturgy, of even the most minimal concept of intellectual property (Ferrone 1993, 197). We have to recognise that much of the 'improvisation' of Italian professional actors was built around systematic plagiarism: in so far as each actor possessed an original repertoire, it was largely constructed by a technique analogous to dismantling existing edifices and re-using the bricks. We must also note that the skills involved were verbal, and that the genre was not characterised exclusively by acrobatic slapstick. For as long as these troupes were playing to Italian audiences, they were being listened to at least as much as they were being watched. When they moved abroad and had to conquer a language barrier, the importance of bodily expression was bound to increase. This is one reason why a scholarly approach

19 This was originally published in 1634.

based on the French experience has tended to give an impression of a more 'physical' theatre: earlier experience in Italy would have offered a different balance of emphases.[20]

Having said this, though, we must not push the revisionist pendulum too far. Many moments of sheer clownery performed by the *parti ridicole* were no doubt based on genuinely creative invention on the part of an individual actor. Some of the gags were tried and tested, and became the so-called 'lazzi' eventually catalogued with identifying names by some professionals.[21] Others, certainly, arose from *ad hoc* inspiration in the course of an individual performance. If this had not been the case, the very particular admiration which was afforded by international audiences to the 'Italian' method, and to individual star performers, would have had little to base itself on. Moreover, the surviving visual evidence, one-sided as it may perhaps be, has left a vivid impression of grotesque and expressive bodily performance.

The essentially oral nature of the improvisation skill means that it is hard for any text to have survived which could be seen as a '*commedia dell'arte* script': in strict logic, the phrase is a contradiction in terms. Even a direct transcription from a performance would be a little suspect, as regards its accuracy; and there are no extant texts which actually claim such a status. Most of our insights into the style and humour of the various masks come from texts which were published separately, and which in modern terms rank as merchandising material. The techniques or structures which survive in theatrical texts, and which we can identify as possibly relating to improvisation, are both few and speculative.

20 During the 1980s the British Arts Council, in categorising different art forms, included *commedia dell'arte* under the heading of 'Mime/Dance'. I would argue that this is a fundamental misapprehension.

21 The centrality of the *lazzo* (plural: *lazzi*) to improvisation technique is probably exaggerated by modern scholars, on the strength of the jargon which had become common in 18th-century France (where *lazzi* was regularly used as a singular noun). Some of the earliest collections of scenarios, including the printed one of Flaminio Scala, do not use the term at all; and one of them refers to *azzi* rather than *lazzi*, making arguments about the etymology of the word even more difficult. For a traditional account, see Gordon 1983.

By coincidence, however, one of them is alluded to in a single stage direction in Shakespeare: the moment in *Henry IV, Part 1* (2.4), when Prince Hal and Poins tease the lowly servant Francis in the Eastcheap tavern:

Here they both call him; the Drawer stands amazed, not knowing which way to go.

No actor can have any difficulty in 'improvising' this short sequence without a written script. The Prince and Poins just have to call out "Francis!", the Drawer perhaps to repeat "Anon, anon, sir!", and they can do all this as many or as few times as they choose. The scene is repetitive, and it is also elastic: once the actors grasp its very simple principle, they can just do it. There is a compositional technique involved here which facilitates improvisation, and which elsewhere we have called the 'elastic gag'; and there is enough written material in early modern Italian comedies (and later in French imitators such as Molière) to identify its regular use. Dialogues could fall into modular units which involved repetition, which could therefore be expanded or contracted on each occasion, and for which a punch-line or an interruption would signal the moment to move on. It is a structure which also works perfectly well in written scripts, which explains why it has survived textually.[22] It can be applied to sentimental rhetoric as well as to farce. In the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*, when Lorenzo and Jessica compete with one another in references to classical heroes and heroines who met "on such a night", they are using the same technique. They could in theory offer more examples, or fewer, than the text includes; and it is very easy to imagine a pair of Italian professionals delivering a similar scene.[23] Alongside this repetitive modular structure, the most obvious other tool for improvisors is the development of monologues or other lengthy set speeches, which can be learned by heart and inserted into any story with appropriate minor modifications. Since such speeches are equally common in scripted

22 This proposal was first made in Andrews 1991, now essay no. 4 in the present volume. I have developed the concept in other writings; e.g. Andrews 1993, 175-94; and in relation to Molière in particular in Andrews 2005.

23 See Andrews 1998, now essay no. 11 in the present volume.

theatre of the period, and since they probably possessed largely the same characteristics on both side of the methodological divide, it is difficult for a modern analyst to determine the extent to which one form of performance was borrowing from the other.

The presence, or indeed the absence, of '*commedia dell'arte* influence' on English Tudor and Stuart drama is therefore hard to establish on the level of individual scenes and speeches. However, we do have important material for comparison on a larger scale. We may be deprived of '*commedia dell'arte* scripts', that is of the words actually pronounced on stage by Italian improvising actors. We are not so short of '*commedia dell'arte* texts' of another type – the summaries which tell us what stories the Italian troupes chose to adapt, and how they organised the scene-by-scene deployment of their plots. Surviving scenarios from the seventeenth century amount to more than 350, starting with the fifty actually put into print by Flaminio Scala in 1611. (A similar number survives from the eighteenth century, though these are naturally less relevant to our present purpose).[24] It is important to understand that although the dates of the surviving collections range forward from 1611 to later in the century, their function was retrospective: they assemble examples of theatre material which had already become canonical in the profession, and which had been used in one variation or another over previous decades. The printed collection of Flaminio Scala, therefore (to take just one example) is a redeployment of numerous established theatergrams – stories, scenes, character confrontations, jokes – many of which had been circulating on professional stages and trestles since well before 1600. This statement is reinforced by the fact, to which we shall shortly return, that much of the material can be traced back to published 16th-century Italian plays from as far back as the 1530s. When we discover in Scala's printed volume of 1611 plot elements which are also found in *Romeo and Juliet*, or in *The Tempest*, we cannot of course then start talking about 'sources', using the traditional criteria of textual criticism. Not only can we exclude Scala's text in itself as a 'source' for Shakespeare; it is also highly unlikely that a Shakespeare play was ever read by Scala.

24 For a full bibliographical list of these collections, all but one of which remained in manuscript, see Andrews 2008, 321.

What we can deduce, however, is that heroines who drink potions in order to pretend to be dead, and love affairs between children of two feuding families, were ideas which had become familiar over a period of time to theatre practitioners in different cultures. They circulated via casual reading, and via the oral theatrical grapevine, and were perceived as belonging to nobody. They were available to be picked up and recycled, separately or together, in a variety of ways – in this case, often in comedies or tragi-comedies which avoided Shakespeare's tragic dénouement. The fake poison device was used quite often, by Scala in print and by other scenario collectors in manuscript, to contribute to a range of plots which have few other resemblances to *Romeo and Juliet*. The whole story originates, of course, in the non-theatrical *novella* by Bandello; but Italian sources provide enough cumulative evidence to show that its theatrical potential was widely recognised and exploited in a deliberately fragmentary fashion.[25]

Overall, the scenario collections show us the range of stories which Italian professional companies preferred to perform – or perhaps, in the case of private manuscript collections, those which their devotees most enjoyed watching and therefore wanted to preserve as a written reminder. In Scala's published volume of 1611, which is produced in a more considered way with an eye on posterity, they fall into well-defined generic categories. In the more informal assemblages, some of which date from not much later, those distinctions begin to be blurred. Plays categorised as 'comedy' always predominate: this is to be expected, granted that the composition of an acting troupe was dictated by a set of required comic roles. The starting formats for 'comedy' were those which had already been established by written Humanist *commedia erudita* in the sixteenth century: Plautine plots of intrigue involving parents, lovers and servants, rapidly diversified with more romanesque elements derived from medieval narrative. As with scripted comedy, the tone could vary between tales involving relatively demanding moral dilemmas for the lovers and others which were very much more superficial and farcical (though the word 'farce' was as yet

25 For *The Tempest*, see Andrews 2014; and for *Romeo and Juliet*, Andrews 2014, esssays nos. 14 and 15 in the present volume.

rarely used in Italy, and had not yet acquired the meaning which we now apply to it). In fact a template had already been created in many published comedies whereby both tones could appear in the same play, the *Innamorati* playing out serious emotions while the *parti ridicole* pursued intrigues of slapstick humiliation alongside them. The great majority of the tales enacted used marriage between the approved pairs of lovers (approved by the audience, that is, not necessarily by their fathers) to create the happy ending: plays celebrating the triumph of adulterous lovers over a miserable cuckold are also found, but such material is less statistically dominant than some critics suggest. By the time the scenarios were being written down, however, there was a strong tendency to contaminate the comic genre with others, particularly with pastoral. In the manuscript collections, a significant number of plots which end in happy marriages are played out in a rustic setting, sometimes with nymphs and shepherds as protagonists, sometimes even with the participation of magicians, satyrs, or classical deities. A few scenarios classed as tragedies do exist; tragi-comedies are a little more numerous; but there is also a greyer category in which full-scale romance episodes are dramatised, in shows which occasionally even aim at an epic quality. The second volume of the 17th-century Locatelli collection, in the Casanatense Library in Rome,[26] opens with a scenario simply entitled *Orlando furioso*, which attempts to get through a number of the central (and most emotionally demanding) episodes of Ariosto's very lengthy epic poem whose definitive edition dates from 1532. Generically the scenario is categorised as an *opera eroica rappresentativa* (best translated as 'heroic work for the stage'), and it has a cast list of forty-one human characters plus three magical animals. To the modern reader, it raises serious questions of how practicable it was to perform; but its presentation on the page follows exactly the same conventions as are applied to the more modest comedies of intrigue which appear in the same volume. The message being conveyed

26 Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, *Manoscritti* 1211 and 1212, datable to the first half of the seventeenth century (its compiler died in 1654), and entitled *Della scena di soggetti comici di B.L.R.* The full text of the *Orlando furioso* scenario is printed in Testaverde 2007, 329-52.

is that improvising *arte* troupes were willing to tackle absolutely anything – 'scene individable, or poem unlimited' – provided, one assumes in this case, that they could find a patron rich enough to pay the production costs.

The point which must be insisted on is that all these generic categories – comedies, tragi-comedies, pastorals, tragedies, and various kinds of 'heroic' work – were also published in Italy as fully scripted plays. In fact the narrative and scenic elements which were constantly recycled in different combinations, in order to produce new (but not very new) scenarios, were themselves largely taken from those same published dramas. The technique of 'dismantling and re-using the bricks', which we have proposed above as the basis of small-scale improvisation, was also the basis of large-scale dramaturgy. This turns out to be true for written plays, as well as for improvised scenarios. A leading Humanist dramatist from Siena, Alessandro Piccolomini – a person who would certainly have distanced himself firmly from lower-class professional troupes – has left us a tantalising description of his attempt to construct what we would now call a database of characters, speeches and scenes which could be re-arranged in new dramatic combinations.[27] Sadly his examples have not survived; but the project offers a glimpse of combinatory techniques which may well have been all-pervading in the construction of plays, in Italy and possibly also elsewhere.

Improvised drama, and improvising troupes, were thus an important and even unique feature of the Italian theatrical scene; but they were not in any way separated or fenced off from plays written by more academic dramatists. Professionals were always willing to tackle the *premeditato*, to learn scripts and recite them, as well as to improvise. Leading actors and actor-managers sometimes re-wrote and published, in 'regular' five-act form, versions of three-act scenarios which had been particularly successful. Much of the improvised material itself was taken, recycled, adapted, kaleidoscopically re-arranged, from fully scripted original plays which are not hard to trace. Seminal scripts by authors such as Pietro Aretino, Machiavelli, 'Ruzante', Sforza Oddi, Giambattista

27 For details, see Andrews 1993, 105-6; also Andrews 2010, essay no. 17 in the present volume.

della Porta, and the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati were regularly pillaged by troupe leaders creating scenarios.

In 1623, Giovan Battista Andreini, actor and playwright son of the renowned Isabella, published a complex metatheatrical comedy entitled *Due comedie in comedia*. As the title suggests, it contains two plays within the play, performed in a Venetian street by two different fictional companies (some of whose members, in their true identities, then turn out to be disguised participants in the very complicated main plot). One company is an amateur Academy, the other is a troupe of professional Comici. The characters in the 'comedia dei Comici' include the south Italian mask Tartaglia, and a number of unnamed stereotypes of trades and professions (pastrycook, greengrocer, chimney sweep, etc.); but no other recognisable *commedia dell'arte* masks. The professional actor playing the French pastrycook is actually identified in the end as Flaminio Scala: a fictional role has been given to the actor-manager and compiler of those fifty scenarios printed in 1611, who was also a friend and collaborator of Giovan Battista Andreini. Both of the 'comedie in comedia' include sentimentally characterised lovers, whose marriages are lined up to provide happy endings. But it is the play mounted by the dilettante Accademici – not the performance offered by the Comici – which includes as characters the Magnifico (Pantalone), Dottor Graziano, and a braggart Capitano Medoro. Andreini, whatever his other aims, seems to be depicting a theatrical culture rife with what we would now call 'crossover' (1623).[28]

In the years around 1600, Italian theatre was a single seamless phenomenon, certainly as far as its raw dramaturgical material was concerned. The situation may have become very different a century later. But such influences on Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre which may have come from *commedia dell'arte* also came, in many cases, from a wider body of Italian drama, 'tragical-comical-historical-pastoral', in which the scripted and the improvised are hard to distinguish and may not be worth distinguishing. The important step to take is to recognise in the first place the overall relevance to English drama of Italian material composed for, and performed on,

28 The on-stage plays are performed in 3.3-8; and in 5.2-10. The full text of the play is in vol. 2 of Ferrone 1985/6.

the stage. Anglophone scholars need to accept in principle, against a tradition of rather inexplicable resistance to the notion, that the Italian sources of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are in no way limited to prose *novelle* and verse romances.

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17

The Contribution of Siena to European Theatre*

The existence of a specifically Sienese contribution to Italian *commedia erudita* is a fact recognised by all modern critics, from the nineteenth century on; and most texts of the relevant Sienese comedies are available to modern readers. Among the scripts which were printed in their own time, *Gl'ingannati*, *Amor costante* and *La Pellegrina* are to be found in twentieth-century anthologies;[1] and all three of these, along with *Alessandro*, have also been edited separately.[2] Only *Hortensio* (1560), and *Gli scambi* by Belisario Bulgarini (1611) still await the attention of modern scholars. Of the texts which were left in manuscript, *Aurelia* (1536) was published in France in 1981 (Celse-Blanc 1981), and the comedy entitled *I prigioni* (1530) was studied and then edited by the Australian scholar Nerida Newbigin (1978, 1-15; 2006). The whole phenomenon of Sienese Renaissance comedy has been the subject of important and well-known studies;[3] no general account of Italian theatre overlooks Siena, and the Intronati Academy in particular.

So what remains to be said on the 'contribution' of Siena? I am now suggesting that there are some firm characteristics of Intronati

* This is an English translation by the author of his own Italian-language article, with added translations of the texts quoted.

1 For example: Borsellino 1962, 1.195-290 (*Gl'ingannati*), 1.291-426 (*Amor costante*), and 1.427-552 (*La Pellegrina*); Davico Bonino 1977, 2.87-184 (*Gl'ingannati*).

2 *Gl'ingannati*: Cerreta's edition in Accademia degli Intronati 1980; the anastatic reprint and Newbigin's edition in Accademia degli Intronati 1984; Pieri's edition in Accademia degli Intronati 2009. The anastatic reprint of *Amor costante* in Piccolomini 1990. *Alessandro* in Piccolomini 1966. *La Pellegrina* in Bargagli 1971.

3 Fundamental to studies of the Intronati is Seragnoli 1980. Studies of the Congrega dei Rozzi are listed below in footnote 5.

dramaturgy – most specifically the attention paid by the Academy in their comedies to female characters – which are still undervalued by critics and historians from Italy. Italian scholars of Renaissance drama still devote less attention than do their anglophone colleagues to issues relating to feminism or to gender studies. This present essay claims that Sienese comedies launched an important trend in comic drama, not only in Italy but generally in Europe.

During the sixteenth century, Italian Humanists drew on the examples and models of Classical theatre texts in order to re-create, even to invent, what we now recognise as modern European theatre. It was Italians who proposed, on the basis of what they could understand and deduce about ancient Greek and Roman theatre, that a play script could be a product of high culture; that the author of such a script deserved the title of 'poet', with its accompanying prestige; and that theatre could rank as an autonomous 'cultural' activity, in the sense which we currently give to that word, and not only as part of a religious ceremony or an emphemeral court celebration.

Where, in particular, did this revolution take place? Among the Italian states of the Cinquecento, scholars identify four major centres where Renaissance drama was developed. Contributions are recognised from Ferrara, Venice, and Florence; and the fourth centre is undoubtedly Siena. What I now propose is that without certain specifically Sienese innovations stage comedy in Italy, and then in Europe, would not have achieved maturity – or would not have matured so soon – in certain ways which we now recognise. This fact will appear even more striking when set against the relatively small number of comedies composed and published by Sienese authors. I have already listed in my opening paragraph all the titles which can be treated in this essay: those printed in the sixteenth century, and therefore available for reading by later dramatists, number only five, or six if we include *Gli scambi*. In contrast, over the same period, there appeared dozens of Florentine comedies, dozens again composed in Venetian territory, and from the duchy of Ferrara a corpus of innovative theatre texts in all genres – comedy, tragedy, and pastoral drama. In Sienese dramatic production, on the other hand, the emphasis seems to have been on quality rather than quantity, a fact that was recognised and appreciated by other Italians of the time. In an anthology of Italian

Commedie Elette ("Selected Comedies") published in 1554, three out of five came from Siena – and they were the only three Sienese comedies which had been printed by that date (Ruscelli 1554).[4]

The conditioning factor in all Cinquecento drama, the fact which clearly distinguished one Italian centre from another, was the practical question of how, and in what context, theatre was produced. In principates like that of the Este in Ferrara, or the Medici in Florence after 1530, theatre activity was subsidised and controlled by the court, and almost all the relevant shows were mounted inside palaces. In republics, theatre was organised in more complex and more interesting ways. Venice appeared on the surface also to be ruled by a 'prince'; but the Doge was an elected constitutional monarch, and two successive Dogi could not come from the same family, so it was impossible to establish a dynasty. For that reason Venice did not really have a 'court', and Venetian theatre developed in a fragmentary, almost private way. Small groups of young aristocrats, the Compagnie della Calza, were from time to time authorised by the Doge and by governing Councils to mount spectacles in the name of the Venetian Republic. In Siena too there was no titular head of state and no court. Autonomous centres of artistic and cultural activity had to emerge spontaneously, in the context of a governmental style which presented itself as rigorously collective. During the sixteenth century there emerged in the city two separate societies of men devoting themselves to theatre production. Ultimately, when we speak of the new 'revolutionary' mode of Humanistic drama, of the genres which gave birth to modern European theatre, we refer only to one of these associations, the Intronati Academy. A brief word about the Congrega dei Rozzi will explain why that group cannot figure in this present discussion.[5]

In the first decades of the Cinquecento, comedies were printed in Siena which did not follow the new neo-classical models, and

4 The plays included were Bibbiena: *La Calandra;* Machiavelli: *La Mandragola; Gl'ingannati, Alessandro,* and *Amor Costante* by the Intronati. Further volumes did not appear.

5 Standard studies of the Rozzi are: Mazzi 1882; Alonge 1967; Valenti 1992; Catoni and Di Gregorio 2001. Pellegrini et al. 2014 includes an article by R. Andrews: "Disprezzo del contadino – o forse no?" (Contempt for the Peasant – or Maybe Not?).

which therefore had little influence on the subsequent development of theatre in Italy and in Europe. Some of them now appear medieval: their content derives from romance literature, or from hagiographies and from religious morality drama; and their structure does not follow the so-called Aristotelian 'Unities', shifting their settings over periods of time and between different cities and rural localities. (The modern-day 'Bruscelli' from Montepulciano still retain similar characteristics). A second genre, also less relevant to the present investigation, was a series of farcical plays, some of them quite brief, set in a peasant society. The peasant characters were treated with a mixture of affection and contempt, and rural dialect was presented as a source of entertainment. These pieces show how Sienese urban artisans wanted to mock the people of the city's *contado* – a group which surely included blood relatives of those artisans who had recently moved into town. Rustic dramas of this type may also have been mounted in other Italian centres; but in Siena they were taken seriously enough to be printed. The dual phenomenon of non-classical Sienese theatre in the early Cinquecento – pseudo-historical dramas and peasant farces – has been labelled by scholars as 'pre-Rozzi theatre'. This name comes from the fact that in 1531 a group of dramatists and amateur performers from the Sienese artisan class founded the Congrega dei Rozzi ('Society of Roughnecks'). In the light of the large number of 'pre-Rozzi' comedies which had already appeared, the year 1531 seems a little late. It is therefore possible that the foundation of a formal Congrega was a defensive reaction to the creation a few years previously of a more aristocratic association, the Intronati. One of the clauses in the Rozzi constitution was that the Congrega did not accept as a member anyone who had ever studied Latin. The Rozzi thus adopted at that point a deliberately parochial character: they refrained from direct competition with their social superiors, and proclaimed their rigorously local identity, their *senesità*.

Readers of this *Bullettino* will be well aware that the Intronati Academy was founded around 1525. The communal theatre building now known as 'Teatro dei Rinnovati' started out as 'Teatro degli Intronati': it has undergone many internal restructurings (the most recent concluded in 2009), but within the four walls that still enclose it some of the very first Intronati comedies were staged.

The Academy aimed to welcome and gather together the most aristocratic elements of Sienese society. According to surviving documents, its title was chosen to indicate (in a joking tone) that the noble Academicians were to exclude from their concerns and from their minds all the clamour produced by the political disagreements which currently afflicted the city of Siena, a clamour said to have indeed rendered them 'intronati', deafened and mentally numbed. In a spirit of harmony, they should ignore political differences which might divide them. They should instead meet together in a fraternal and sociable atmosphere, to pursue activities which were exclusively cultural. In his study of Sienese theatre, Daniele Seragnoli repeatedly uses the word 'utopian' to describe the autonomous sheltered world which the Intronati aimed to create and inhabit.

During the Cinquecento, the Intronati's social activity acquired a reputation in the rest of Italy. The Academy became famous for a characteristic type of gathering, which involved both performed shows and structured social games. The expression 'Veglia senese' (Sienese evening gathering) took on a precise meaning at that time, and also became a model imitated by upper-class societies in other Italian centres. The spread of the concept was aided by the publication, by two brothers who were Academy members, of books which acted as instruction manuals for this unique style of social behaviour: the *Dialogo dei Guochi* (Dialogue on Games) by Girolamo Bargagli (G. Bargagli 1572),[6] and the *Trattenimenti* (Entertainments) by Scipione Bargagli (S. Bargagli 1587).[7] Girolamo was also named as the author of an important comedy, *La Pellegrina*, which will be discussed below. One of the main notable characteristics of the Intronati gatherings, explicitly mentioned in the title of the *Trattenimenti*, was to allow women to participate in games and other activities, something which was not always shared by other Italian noble societies. This fact is significant when we examine Sienese dramaturgy. The Prologues of Intronati comedies – and all of them except *La Pellegrina* have Prologues – explain to us every time that the play was being formally presented to the ladies of the

6 Reprinted seven times up to 1609. Modern edition in Bargagli 1982.

7 Reprinted 1591 and 1592.

Academy, as a courtly tribute but also as a work of art which those ladies had to judge. In fact the Second Prologue of *Alessandro* says:

> Bellissime donne, perdoninmi questi signori, tutti questi altri gentiluomini, s'io non parlo a loro, perché l'usanza degli Intronati fu sempre di parlar a voi . . . (Piccolomini 1966, 115)

> [Fairest ladies, these lords, all these other gentlemen, must forgive me if I don't address them, because the custom of the Intronati has always been to speak to you . . .]

Following a model perhaps derived ultimately from mediaeval French courts, women acted for the Intronati as inspiring Muses, and then as judges of the cultural products offered to them by the men. It was they who had to approve; it was they who were entitled to praise or to condemn. This does not quite appear as a feminist pattern by modern standards, because creative activity is still reserved to men while women remain receptive and therefore passive. However, it is a system which gave to women a kind of paradoxical authority. It is a structure of relations between the sexes which mirrors the one between the male and female courtiers proposed by Baldassarre Castiglione in *Il Libro del Cortegiano* – a work which was of course known and admired throughout Europe. The two Sienese books of the Bargagli brothers take a step further than Castiglione, because they portray social encounters in which women contribute to, and participate in, games and musical performances: they are no longer restricted to a spectator role. From some brief dialogues in Italian comedies of the time, we can intuit that Siena was recognised as a city where women had more freedom than in others. In a comedy composed and set in Florence, Benedetto Varchi's *La suocera* (The Mother-in-Law, 1546), the young lover Fabrizio gives vent to his frustration at the fact that Florentine women are kept by their families in a kind of purdah, so that their suitors and future husbands never have the chance to see them:

> Bene aggia Siena in questa parte; non sono le donne meno oneste, perché siano piú libere, quando sono veramente donne, ma bene manco melense. (Varchi 1569, 2.5)

> [More power to Siena in this respect: ladies are not less virtuous for being more free, if they're real ladies, just less simple-minded.]

This text did not become available in print until 1569; but earlier, in the Sienese comedy *Alessandro* printed in 1545, we find a judgement provoked by a similar comparison between the customs of the two respective cities. A servant character named Querciola, speaking to his young master, says the following:

> I Fiorentini ancora, non che parlare, non ti lassan pur veder una donna loro. In Siena il primo onore che si fa a' forestieri, son lor fitte le donne dinanzi, al dispetto loro. E conosco di certi giovini che si procaccian l'amicizie de i forestieri per questa via, mostrandosi piú padroni di queste donne che non ne sono; la va da estremo a estremo. (Piccolomini 1966, 170)

> [The Florentines don't even let you see one of their women, let alone talk to her. In Siena, the first thing they do to make guests welcome is to plant the women in front of them willy-nilly. And I know some young men who seek out friendships with foreigners on that basis, pretending to have more control over these women than they really have: it all goes from one extreme to another.]

So in Querciola's view, Sienese habits are extreme and socially dangerous – and in fact when his master Cornelio says "Bisogna viver sicondo l'usanza" (We have to live according to custom), he replies: "Sí, quando non è unsanzaccia" (Yes, when it's not a bad custom). The action of this comedy is set in Pisa, so the discussion can come across as unbiased. But here, as in Varchi's text, a difference is observed between Siena and Florence.

It becomes all the more interesting to note that a parallel contrast between those cities was noted recently by art critics. In 2007, an important exhibition of Sienese art was mounted in London. A British woman journalist expressed the opinion, shared by others, that "Florence is crammed with muscular displays of an antique and often sanguinary world . . ." (Saunders 2007), going on to cite the opinion of another woman (Frieda Lawrence, wife of the novelist D.H. Lawrence) that "This [Florence] is a man's town: . . . in Siena the feminising influence of the Virgin is everywhere" (Frieda Lawrence, qtd in Saunders 2007).

The present essay aims to show the way in which a 'feminising' principle was underlined, uniquely, in Sienese comedies of the Cinquecento. The plays which can be considered have been listed in my very first paragraph, but we should now summarise some well-known facts regarding their chronological order, and about the different contexts in which they appeared. We can limit our attention to those plays which reached print, and so set aside *L'Aurelia* and *I prigioni* which were left in manuscript: we are concerned only with those texts which became available to general readership, and which could thus go on to influence dramatists writing new scripts and professional troupe leaders devising improvised shows.

Gl'ingannati was performed to the Intronati Academicians for Carnival of the year 1532 (often recorded at the time, in 'Sienese style', as 1531). It was offered as a sequel to a playful spectacle entitled *Il Sacrificio*, which had been mounted for Epiphany of the same year. The *Sacrificio* title is attached to the first printing of the play in 1537, and to some subsequent ones: the comedy was in fact reprinted nineteen times (and so twenty in all) until 1611,[8] always with its authorship attributed collectively to the Intronati Academy.

Amor costante was composed and prepared in 1536, for a proposed visit to Siena by the Emperor Charles V. It seems in the end that the play was never in fact staged, perhaps through lack of sufficient financial resources, or perhaps because the Emperor was not interested. The play was printed in 1540, and reached a total of fifteen editions until 1611. In all the printings, Alessandro Piccolomini was named as the author (see Seragnoli 1980, 46-66).

Alessandro, also attributed to Piccolomini, was a private performance by the Academy for Carnival 1544. It was printed either in that year or in 1545.[9] It received twelve editions until 1611.

8 In 1611 the Sienese publisher Florimi issued a two-volume anthology of *Commedia degli Intronati*: it included the script of *Gli scambi* by Belisario Bulgarini, the only printed edition of that play. Except in the case of *La Pellegrina*, which was re-issued by Florimi in 1618, that collection contains the last early modern printings of the comedies now under discussion.

9 Along with the Roman edition of 1545, there exists an undated Mantuan printing by Ruffinelli, which contains important Prologues and may predate the Roman one. However, the reference on the title page to "Due Prologhi non piú impressi" ("Two Prologues not previously printed") suggests that

Hortensio was planned as a welcome to Cosimo I de' Medici, for his first visit to Siena as Grand Duke of Tuscany. It is then unclear whether its first staging took place during that visit in the autumn of 1560, or during his return passage in January 1561. The comedy was published in 1571, with collective attribution to the Intronati: it had a total of seven editions up to 1611.

La Pellegrina is well known to have been a theatrical contribuition to the 1589 celebration of the wedding of Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici to Christine of Lorraine: an event which was celebrated (in its own time, as well as by modern scholars) as 'the Florentine Interludes'. The comedy had in fact been offered at some point during the 1560s to that same Ferdinando when he was a cardinal and not yet Grand Duke. The text was attributed to Girolamo Bargagli (whose academic name was 'il Materiale'); but surviving correspondence suggests a collaboration between Bargagli and Fausto Sozzini ('il Frastagliato'), recruited and perhaps supervised by Alessandro Piccolomini (Bargagli 1971, 12-6). Years later Ferdinando, or someone on his behalf, resurrected the text, modified and censored it, and had it performed during the festivities of 1589, on alternate evenings along with shows improvised by the Gelosi company. Printing took place in the same year as the performance, 1589, and the comedy received six editions altogether until 1618.[10]

We can note therefore that while *Gl'ingannati* and *Alessandro* were conceived as private performances for the members of the Academy, the other three plays were mounted for important public occasions. In the case of *La Pellegrina*, we have the exceptional case of a script written around 1565, forgotten, resurrected, censored, and then used in 1589 for an event never foreseen when it was first composed. This history confirms a tendency whereby the Intronati Academy was always ready to offer its creations to the service of

this is not the first edition.

10 The history of the *Pellegrina* text was established by Borsellino 1974. It was then reinforced by Cerreta in his work on the manuscript and printed versions (1971). From the year 1606 there are two printings: the Sienese one by Meglietti listed by Cerreta, and a Venetian one by Pulciani listed (and confirmed to me by email) by the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This is why I now list six editions instead of Cerreta's five.

the state – the 'state' in 1536 being the Republic of Siena, replaced in later years by the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

It is also recognised as significant that while three of these comedies are attributed to a single author (either Alessandro Piccolomini or Girolamo Bargagli), others were published as anonymous collective products of the whole Academy. In fact, according to what is possible to deduce from surviving documents, we now know that all the dramatic texts of the Intronati were produced by a team of writers (Seragnoli 1980). The composition of each play involved a series of stages: first the choice or construction of the plot, then the division into scenes, finally the drafting of the dialogue. Each of these operations tended to be delegated to a different person or persons. In the above-mentioned *Dialogo de' Giuochi* of 1572, Girolamo Bargagli (to whom *La Pellegrina* was attributed on paper) felt moved to underline this collaborative principle. According to him, Intronati members were inclined to consider everything they possessed as a property held in common with all the other Academicians; and with regard to artistic creation he wrote:

> . . . E quel che pare piú mirabile, erano tanto poco avidi della propria gloria che si compiacevano che le particolari fatiche sotto il nome universale dell'Accademia uscissero fuori. Anzi, con tutto che da noi sieno teneramente amati i parti del nostro ingegno, furono di quelli che si contentarono che quel che veramente era nato di loro si supponesse e del tutto tenuto fosse per figliuolo altrui. (G. Bargagli 1982, 137)

> [. . . they had so little desire for personal fame that they were perfectly happy for individual efforts to be issued under the collective name of the Academy. In fact, although normally we all have a close attachment to the offspring of our own talents, there were some who were quite content for something which was really their own progeny to be supposed, or entirely believed, to be someone else's child.]

In a contemporary Sienese context, one is moved to make comparisons with the community enterprise of the Teatro Povero di Monticchiello, which has operated for more than forty years

in a manner similar to that of the Intronati (see in particular Andrews 1998); and to wonder if some ingredient in the water of Monte Amiata perhaps favours this spirit of communal creativity. However, the example of Monticchiello also shows that such collective enterprises work best if they are presided over, and ultimately co-ordinated, by a single person. In the case of the Intronati Academy, the significant guru was the man to whom *Amor costante* and *Alessandro* were formally attributed: the well-known figure of Alessandro Piccolomini (1508-1578), a scholar of encyclopedic interests who made his public career in the Church, and ended holding the notional bishopric of the Greek town of Patras.[11]

For the theatrical work of the Intronati, it was certainly Piccolomini who chose the tone and the style, and who even established some theoretical principles – they can be traced in his *Annotazioni alla Poetica di Aristotile* published in 1572 (see Refini 2009). He and his collaborators tried to integrate in a coherent manner all the various aspects of a theatre production, paying attention to scenography, to acting style, and even to the use of music and dance. In the end, however, his priority was the dramaturgy of comic scripts. It is now thought that Alessandro supervised the choice of story to be dramatised, and its division into Acts and Scenes. At a certain moment he launched a fascinating dramaturgical project the product of which has sadly not survived. He described it in a dedicatory letter to a volume he had written on astronomy. The essence of the project was to create a manual of comic dramaturgy, in a form which we would now describe as a database. The premise which underlay it was that the characters of stage comedy – the things which they might say, even the dialogues they might pursue with other characters – were fixed stereotypes. Human nature and behaviour followed simple permanent laws, which repeated themselves in terms of foreseeable words and actions. And so the dramatic lines, the speeches, the dialogues and the scenes performed by comic characters could be compiled and

11 Among numerous treatments of Piccolomini, we can list here Cerreta 1960; Celse 1973/4; Piccolomini 2008. For his influence on Intronati dramaturgy, see Seragnoli 1980.

listed in a kind of catalogue, and then recycled by playwrights of the future:

> Primieramente io aveva disegnato e formato tutte quasi quelle sorti di persone che possano o sogliano rappresentarsi ne le comedie, secondo quelle diversità che occorran trovarsi per varie cause ne la vita comune de l'uomo: come a dire per causa di congiunzion di sangue, come son padri, figliuoli, fratelli, nepoti, e simili; per diversità di fortuna, come son poveri, ricchi, servi, padroni; di età come vecchi, giovani, fanciulli; di professione, come legisti, medici, soldati, pedanti, parassiti, meretrici, ruffiani, mercanti e simili; di abito d'animo, come avari, prodighi, giusti, prudenti, stolti, gelosi, incostanti, vantatori, arroganti, pusillanimi, et altri cosí fatti; et in somma andavo io discorrendo per tutte quelle qualità di persone e di vita che possano rappresentare ne le comedie la vita comune de gli uomini. Or a ciascheduna di queste persone aveva io disegnato d'accomodare primamente varie scene di soliloqui, le quali se ben fussero tra sé diverse, fussero nondimeno proporzionate secondo il decoro e la qualità di coloro che si rappresentano. E di poi incatenando et in vari modi accoppiando le già dette persone, com'a dire il padre col figlio, il padron col servo, il servo col servo, l'innamorato con l'amata, il ruffiano con l'arruffianato . . . **Avevo proposto di fare in ciascun di questi accoppiamenti diverse scene;** avendo insieme l'occhio al decoro, tra 'l verisimile de le persone che si rappresentano; et ad **accomodar le scene a vari concetti e diverse invenzioni**, acciocché si potessono applicare a diverse favole, **con levar solo o aggiugnere qualche cosetta, che potesse fare a proposito di quella favola che si avesse per le mani**. (Qtd in Seragnoli 1980, 99)[12]

> [First of all I had listed and described most of the types of person who can be, or normally are, represented in comedies, according to those distinctions which are usually found for various reasons in the ordinary life of men: that is to say, according to blood relationships, like fathers, sons, brothers, nephews and such like; according to diversity of fortune, such as rich and poor, servants and masters; of age, such as old, young and children; of profession, such as lawyers,

12 The original work is Piccolomini's "Dedicatory letter to Antonio Cocco" in *La sfera del mondo . . .* (Venezia, Varisco, 1573). Emphases added.

> doctors, soldiers, pedants, parasites, whores, bawds, merchants, and so on; of emotional state, such as angry, amorous, fearful, bold, confident, desperate, and so on; of habit of mind, such as miserly, prodigal, just, prudent, foolish, jealous, fickle, boastful, arrogant, cowardly, and other such; and in this way I was making a survey of all those types of character and background which can represent in comedies the ordinary life of men. Now, to each one of these characters I had planned to attach first of all sets of monologue scenes, which although all different from one another would all be adjusted to the decorum and quality of the people represented. And then, linking and coupling these characters in various ways, as it were father with son, master with servant, servant with servant, lover with beloved, bawd with victim . . . **I had planned to create various scenes for each of these pairings**, having an eye always to verisimilitude in relation to the persons represented; and to **adapt the scenes to various concepts and different inventions**, so that they could be applied to many different stories, **with just small additions and omissions which would be relevant to whatever story was being treated**.]

Piccolomini was effectively proposing to assemble a kind of *libro generico*, or *zibaldone*, of reusable fragments of dialogue; and we can use those terms because the whole process recalls very closely the notebooks full of repertoire items, which *commedia dell'arte* actors kept for their personal use. It is unusual and even surprising, to a theatre historian, to find such similarity between this methodology proposed by an erudite, upper-class, dilettante dramatist, and the practices of professional actors who were not upper-class at all, and whose erudition might in some cases be debatable. *Commedia dell'arte* actors worked in this same way: each one of them memorised a stock of speeches and expressions suitable for his or her role. They regularly made use of this repertoire, attempting as Piccolomini suggested to "adapt the scenes to various concepts and different inventions": like him, they would make "small additions and omissions which would be relevant to whatever story was being treated". The result, on an *arte* stage, was a series of scenes based on typical stock 'accoppiamenti' (pairings).

To show the relevance to early Sienese comedies of this method of composition, we can quote a couple of concrete examples from

published Intronati comedies. In 1.3 of *Gl'ingannati*, the young heroine Lelia emerges on to the stage for the first time, in her boy's disguise, to explain to the audience what she is doing. She is in approximately the same situation as Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: in her male identity she is acting as page boy to young Flamminio, with whom she is in love. As Flamminio's servant, she has to carry messages to Isabella, the woman whom he is now pursuing. This is her first speech to the audience:

> Lelia Gli è pure un grande ardire il mio, quando io 'l considero, che, cognoscendo i disonesti costumi di questa scorretta gioventú modanese, mi metta sola in questa ora a uscir di casa! Oh come mi starebbe bene che qualcun di questi gioveni scapestrati mi pigliasse per forza e, tirandomi in qualche casa, volesse chiarirsi s'io son maschio o femina e cosí m'insegnasseno a uscir di casa, cosí di buona ora! Ma di tutto questo è cagione l'amore ch'io porto a questo ingrato e a questo crudel di Flamminio. Oh che sorte è la mia! *Amo chi m'ha in odio, chi sempre mi biasma; servo chi non mi cognosce* . . . ed aiutolo, per piú dispetto, ad amare un'altra – che, quando si dirà, nissun sarà che lo creda – senza altra speranza che di poter saziare questi occhi di vederlo un dí a mio modo. Ed infino a qui m'è andato assai ben fatto ogni cosa. Ma, da ora innanzi, come farò? Che partito ha da essere il mio? . . . (Accademia degli Intronati 2009, 49-50; my emphasis)

> [Lelia Surely I am becoming quite shameless, when I think that in spite of knowing how lewd is the behaviour of these dissolute young men in Modena, I still choose to venture out of doors alone, at this hour! It would serve me right if one of those debauched youths were to seize me by force, drag me into some house, and decide to see for himself whether I am male or female. That would teach me to go out so early! But the cause of all this daring is Love, the love I feel for that cruel, ungrateful Flamminio. Oh what a fate to suffer! **I love a man who hates me, who constantly disparages me; I serve a man who does not know me** . . . and, even more unbearable, I help him to court another woman – no one will believe this, if it ever becomes known – with no hope other than to be able some day to quench this thirst I have for the mere sight of him. And until now, everything has gone sufficiently well. But how shall I manage from now on? What course can I follow? . . .]

Most of Lelia's introductory words are plot-specific: the young woman is explaining facts which the spectator needs to understand in order to follow the story. But the phrase which I have emphasised in bold type is one which could be extracted and exported into a large number of other comedies of the period: "I love a man who hates me, who constantly disparages me; I serve a man who does not know me". The binary opposition here, an extremely simple rhetorical device, is capable of being extended and repeated at length by any dramatist – or, in later years, by any improvising professional actress – who wants to linger over the point. It is easy to find a number of Italian comedies of the later Cinquecento, and also a number of scenarios for improvisation, in which a heroine would be motivated to deliver the same words, probably at greater length.

In this case the phrase may seem too brief and banal to support the thesis now proposed; so let us turn to another example, also taken from a speech involving exposition. A decade after *Gl'ingannati*, in the Sienese comedy *Alessandro* (1.5), we see the first entry of a lover, male this time, who also has to present himself and his predicament to the public. Young Cornelio has sent an umpteemth letter to his beloved Lucilla, and is waiting for his servant Querciola to bring him back an answer:

> CORNELIO Il Querciola non viene; e io mi sento consumare per il triemo ch'io ho, che quella crudel di Lucilla, com'ella suole, non abbia voluto accettare il presente ch'io l'ho mandato; ancor che mi paia aver veduto da certi pochi giorni in qua un non so che in lei, che m'ha dato un poco di speranza. Oh Dio! egli è pur un gran fatto che la natura delle cose comporti *che s'abbia andar dietro a chi fugge, amar chi odia, e pregar chi non ode.* Egli è un anno ch'io ho servita questa ingrata con tanta fede e con tanta fermezza, quanta si può desiderare in persona che ami; e ogni dí piú cruda e piú dura mi si è móstra. Non ha mai voluto legger mie lettere, accettar miei presenti, o far cosa che mi sia grata; hòlla pregata ultimamente, che mi voglia per ultima grazia odir due parole, né si degna di farlo. Ah donne, donne, come ci scorgete, ah! Voglio andar a trovar il mio caro Alessandro . . . (Piccolomini 1966, 137)[13]

13 I have made one editorial amendment to Cerreta's text.

> [CORNELIO Querciola hasn't turned up yet; and I'm shaking like a leaf, for fear that Lucilla, in her usual cruel way, has refused to accept the present I sent her. Though over the last few days I've thought I saw some small change in her manner, which has given me a bit of hope. Oh God! It's hard to bear that – in the very nature of things, it seems – **you have to pursue the person who avoids you, love the person who hates you, and plead with the person who won't listen**. For a whole year, now, I've been paying court to this ungrateful girl, with all the faith and constancy that one could possibly desire in a lover; and every day she behaves more cruelly and harshly towards me. She's never wanted to read my letters, or accept my presents, or do anything which might please me. Just now I've begged her just to listen to a word or two, as a single favour, and she's too high and mighty to do it. Ah, you women, you women, what do you reduce us to? I must go and find my friend Alessandro . . .]

Here we can identify a single phrase which echoes the one also delivered in *Gl'ingannati*: "you have to pursue the person who avoids you, love the person who hates you, and plead with the person who won't listen", comparable with Lelia's "I love a man who hates me . . . " quoted above. But in fact the whole central part of the above speech can be seen as autonomous and exportable, a piece of prose rhetoric which could be used by other characters in other comedies. The words are capable of being memorised and recycled, repeatedly, with minor variants, by an actor accustomed to play the role of *Innamorato*. They could find a place in such an actor's repertory, in his *libro generico*.

It is highly unlikely that Alessandro Piccolomini, an aristocratic erudite dramatist, would ever have wanted to associate himself with, or see himself compared to, lower-class professional actors. Nevertheless, his approach to dramaturgy as shown in the dedicatory letter quoted above, is identical to that of *commedia dell'arte* practitioners. In Piccolomini's mind it was an experimental exercise dictated by Humanist attitudes: an exercise exploring how human nature possesses permanent characteristics which repeat themselves in life, and which can therefore also repeat themselves on stage. In the mind of a professional troupe leader, on the other hand, it was simply a practical aid to the rapid production of a

ready-made set of stage shows, which could be mounted quickly without calling on the work of a dramatist. During the course of the Cinquecento, Italian theatre both erudite and commercial made increasing use of this same principle of composition: plays were put together like mosaics or kaleidoscopes, made up of already existing fragments re-assembled and permuted in new – but not always very new – combinations. These 'already existing fragments' have been labelled as 'theatergrams' by the American scholar Louise George Clubb (Clubb 1989, 1-26; 65-89). Research now suggests that among the theatergrams used in scripts and in scenarios during the later Cinquecento, a significant number are traceable to the modest corpus of comedies published by the Intronati Academy, most of all to *Gl'ingannati* and *La Pellegrina*.[14]

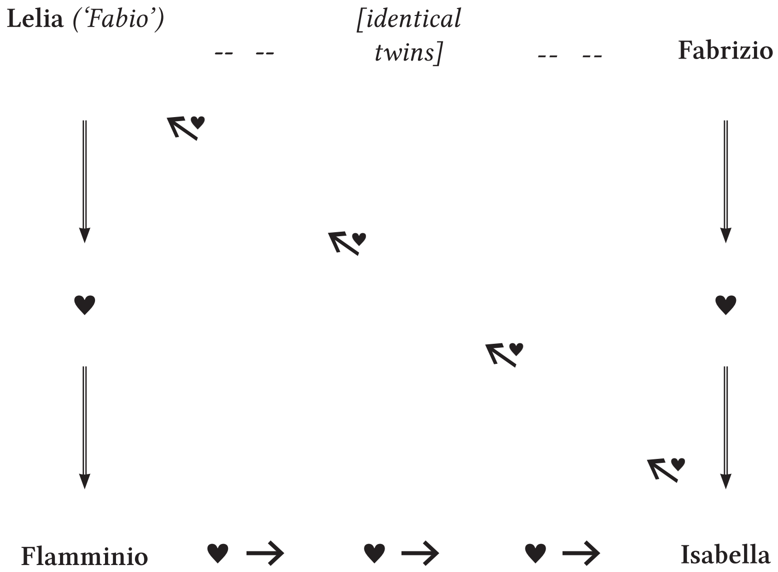
We now turn specifically to examining the 'female presence' in Intronati comedies.

The comedy eventually entitled *Gl'ingannati* was first mounted, as noted above, for Carnival in 1532. It became one of the most influential plays of the sixteenth century, in terms of theatergrams stolen and recycled in later Italian scripts and scenarios. We have seen that it was printed no fewer than twenty times, up to 1611: a significant fact in itself, given that Italian Cinquecento comedies rarely achieved more than five or six editions, and many were only printed once. *Gl'ingannati* was the first Italian *commedia erudita* to be translated – into French, in 1540 (Estienne 1540).[15] Shakespeare scholars have for a long time recognised the play as a source, direct or indirect, for *Twelfth Night*, composed some time after 1600. In fact the relationships between the four young characters of *Gl'ingannati* – between the four *Innamorati* roles, in *commedia dell'arte* terms – are identical to the central relationships of the Shakespeare play. This can be shown in diagrammatic form: the vertical links in each case show the final 'happy ending', while the horizontal/diagonal ones show relationships which are 'mistaken' and eventually blocked:

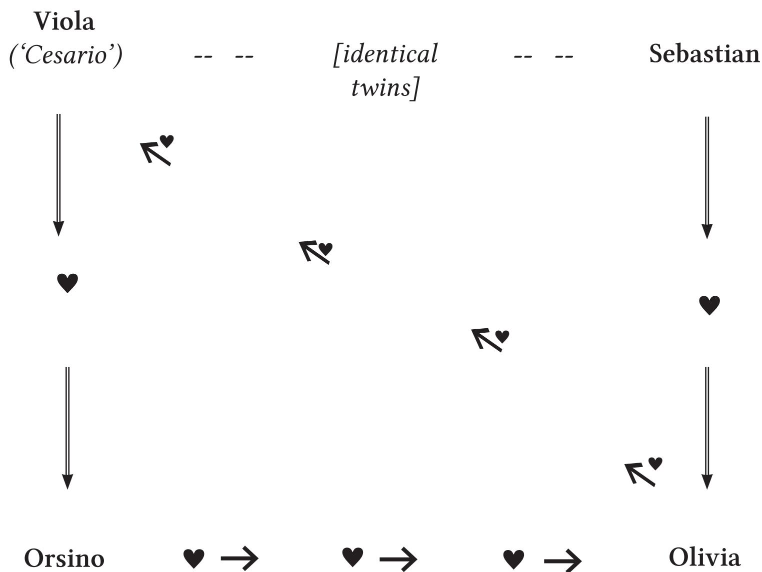
14 For scenarios in particular, Andrews 2008; especially the Introduction, 32-6.

15 The reprint entitled *Comedie du Sacrifice* (Lyon: Fradin & de Tours, 1543) was long thought to be the first edition. There were further reprints in Lyon in 1548 and 1550.

Gli Ingannati



Twelfth Night



There are however substantial differences between these Italian and English comedies, in terms of tone, setting, and the contribution of minor characters to the love relationships. The divergences reflect the respective dramaturgical styles of the two national theatre traditions. *Gl'ingannati* is set in the contemporary Italian city of Modena; *Twelfth Night* in a fantasy land arbitrarily named 'Illyria'. In Modena the lovers have to avoid the attentions and control of the elderly fathers of Lelia and Isabella; in Illyria, by contrast, all four of them, for a range of different reasons, can operate autonomously without family constraints. The cast list of *Gl'ingannati* prefigures clearly – more clearly than any other Italian comedy of that decade – the constitution of a professional *arte* company of a few years later: like most such troupes it has two Elders (*Vecchi*), four Lovers (*Innamorati*), a *Capitano*, and a collection of Servants (*Servi*) both male and female. Shakespeare has nothing to do with that structure, and his participants either reflect more English stereotypes or are products of his personal imagination. On the performance side, Shakespeare chose not to use the most singular characteristic of *Gl'ingannati*: the decision to have the roles of the twins played by a single actor, making it impossible for the two characters to appear on stage together. This seems to be the first recorded use in modern theatre of a casting strategy which was then repeatedly adopted in *arte* scenarios, and by later dramatists such as Carlo Goldoni (in his *Venetian Twins*), Georges Feydau, and Dario Fo.[16]

Gl'ingannati is thus innovative from many points of view; but most of all it is revolutionary in an Italian context, in terms of the initiative which it grants, and the attention it pays, to its female characters. In the later *Twelfth Night*, the heroine Viola finds herself by chance, more than by design, in the dilemma posed by her two simultaneous identities. Lelia, on the other hand, disguises herself as a boy deliberately, with the intention of sabotaging Flamminio's attempts to woo Isabella. Lelia and Flamminio had been informally engaged in the past, before Flamminio forgot her and turned his

16 For this aspect of the play, see R. Andrews: "*Gli Ingannati* as a Text for Performance", no. 1 in the present volume. Comparisons between the Italian comedy and *Twelfth Night* have become commonplace among Shakespeare scholars; but see in particular Salingar 1974, 211-8.

affections elsewhere: Lelia is determined to recapture her lover. When Isabella falls in love with the presumed page boy 'Fabio', Lelia tries to intervene and exploit the situation. Viola, by contrast, submits herself to whatever fate decrees[17] (along with many other heroines of Italian Baroque comedy). Lelia's scheme fails, and she is obliged to take refuge with her nurse Clemenzia. It is then Clemenzia, the strongest female character in the play, who works shrewdly on the feelings and the conscience of Flamminio, to bring him back to his first attachment. In the long crucial dialogue of 5.2, Clemenzia allusively narrates to Flamminio his own and Lelia's story, so as to persuade him to change his attitude:

FLAMMINIO Io vorrei che la fosse squartata.
CLEMENZIA Eh! Voi non dite da vero.
FLAMMINIO S'io non dico da vero? Ti so dir che la m'ha chiarito!
CLEMENZIA E sí! A voi giovinacci sta bene ogni male, ché sète <i> piú ingrati del mondo.

[FLAMMINIO I'd like to rip her apart! / CLEMENZIA Go on! You can't mean it. / FLAMMINIO Can't I? She's made it pretty clear what she means. / CLEMENZIA Well, whatever she's done, it serves you right. You young men are the most ungrateful creatures in the world.]

(To launch her feminine manipulation of the male character, Clemenzia appeals not to the love which Flamminio once felt for Lelia, but to his feelings about himself. In a list of moral and social vices, ingratitude figured in the society of that time as particularly shameful, so a sixteenth-century gentleman would be anxious to avoid being accused of it. Clemenzia is attacking Flamminio by casting doubt on his self-image. And Flamminio reacts immediately to the provocation:)

FLAMMINIO Questo non dir per me: ch'ogni altro vizio mi si potrebbe forse provare, ma questo dell'essere ingrato, no, ché piú mi dispiace che ad uom che viva.
CLEMENZIA Io non lo dico per voi. Ma è stata in questa terra una giovane che accorgendosi d'esser mirata da un cavaliere par vostro modanese, s'invaghí tanto di lui che la non vedeva piú

17 "VIOLA Oh Time, thou must untangle this, not I" (*Twelfth Night*, 2.2).

qua né piú là che quanto era longo.

FLAMMINIO Beato lui! felice lui! Questo non potrò già dir io.

[FLAMMINIO That is not true of me. I know well that I have my faults, but ingratitude is not one of them. It's a thing I detest more than anyone. / CLEMENZIA Well, perhaps not you, then. But there was a young lady in this town, who realised that she was admired by a Modenese gentleman rather like yourself; and she fell for him in return, so desperately that she had eyes for no one else in the world. / FLAMMINIO He's a lucky man, then. I wish I could say the same in my case.]

(This introduces the simple dramatic irony which pervades the rest of the scene. The audience is aware that Flamminio could in fact boast of being loved in that way, but by Lelia rather than by Isabella).

CLEMENZIA Accadde che 'l padre mandò questa povera giovane innamorata fuor di Modena. E pianse, nel partir, tanto che fu maraviglia, temendo ch'egli non si scordasse di lei. Il qual subito ne riprese un'altra, come se la prima mai non avesse veduta.

FLAMMINIO Io dico che costui non può esser cavaliere; anzi è un traditore.

[CLEMENZIA Well, it happened that the girl's father sent her away from Modena for a while. And when she left, she was in such tears as you've never seen, for fear he should forget her while she was gone. And in fact he turned straight away to another woman, as though the first had never existed for him. / FLAMMINIO Then that man is not a gentleman, as you said he was. He is an ungrateful deserter.]

(Flamminio thus inadvertently accuses himself: we could choose to see here the same irony as appears in Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but in comic mode).

CLEMENZIA Ascolta: c'è peggio. Tornando, ivi a pochi mesi, la giovane, e trovando che 'l suo amante amava altri e da quella tale egli era poco amato, per fargli servizio, abbandonò la casa, suo padre, e pose in pericolo l'onore; e, vestita da famiglio, s'acconciò con quel suo amante per servitore.

FLAMMINIO È accaduto in Modena questo caso?

Clemenzia E voi cognoscete l'uno e l'altro.
Flamminio Io vorrei piú presto esser questo aventurato amante che esser signor di Milano.
Clemenzia E che piú? Questo suo amante, non la cognoscendo, l'adoperò per mezzana tra quella sua innamorata e lui; e questa poveretta, per fargli piacere, s'arrecò a fare ogni cosa.

[Clemenzia But wait, there is worse to come. When the young girl came back a few months later, and found her lover was in love with a woman who cared nothing for him, then to do him service she left her house and her father, and put her honour at risk. She dressed as a page boy, and got herself hired as a servant by the man she loved. / Flamminio This actually happened in Modena? / Clemenzia And you know both the young people concerned. / Flamminio I would rather be loved as that man was loved than be Duke of Milan. / Clemenzia And then what happens? This lover of hers still didn't know her, and he used her as go-between to carry messages to that other woman; and that poor girl, just to give him pleasure, did exactly as she was told.]

(At this point, as we shall see, Clemenzia starts to alter the full truth of the matter).

Flamminio Oh virtuosa donna! oh fermo amore! cosa veramente da porre in esempio a' seculi che verranno! Perché non è avvenuto a me un tal caso?
Clemenzia Eh! In ogni modo, voi non lasciareste Isabella.
Flamminio Io lasciarei, quasi che non t'ho detto, Cristo, per una tale. E pregoti, Clemenzia, che tu mi facci cognoscer chi è costei.

[Flamminio Now that is true virtue, true loyalty! An example for all time! Why could such a thing not happen to me? / Clemenzia Well . . . in any case, even if it did, you'd never give up Isabella. / Flamminio I'd give up . . . I nearly said Christ, for a woman like that. Please, Clemenzia, can't you tell me who she is? (Accademia degli Intronati 2009, 162-8)][18]

18 In the production of *Gl'ingannati* which reopened the Teatro dei Rinnovati di Siena on 3 June 2009, most of this dialogue was cut by the director.

It is at this point that Clemenzia brings Lelia out on to the stage, and the audience sees her for the first time in woman's clothes. This *coup de scène*, and Flamminio's reaction to it, are entirely predictable. Meanwhile, spectators who have been following the plot will have noticed that Clemenzia has narrated Lelia's story inaccurately. According to her, Lelia served Flamminio faithfully, carried messages of love to Isabella, and "just to give him pleasure, did exactly as she was told". In fact, during the first two acts of the comedy, we have seen Lelia do everything she could to deceive both Isabella and her master Flamminio. The play's happy ending is thus achieved here at the price of a narrative supplied by Clemenzia which was at best tendentious if not a downright lie. In other moments we have seen that same Clemenzia mercilessly mocking old Gherardo, who was hoping to marry the young heroine (1.4); and we have also seen another female servant, Pasquella, mocking, tricking and humiliating the Spanish soldier Giglio who was trying to seduce her (2.3; 4.6; 5.4). In this comedy it is the women who triumph: the men receive what they deserve, or what will do them most good, rather than what they thought they wanted. The whole plot is manipulated by shrewd female wisdom.

To us now, this tendency might seem common enough in European stage comedy. We can cite many parallel examples of shrewd wise heroines. We can remember Susanna and the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*; Goldoni's *Locandiera* and his suitably titled *Vedova scaltra* (The Crafty Widow); subtle complex heroines who control comedies by Marivaux; some women of ability and judgement created by Molière and by Shakespeare. We could in fact draw up a long list of female protagonists in French, English and Italian comedies who show themselves to be wiser, more morally coherent, more successfully intriguing, than the male characters with whom, or against whom, they operate. Nevertheless, it is a statistically provable fact, though one rarely faced by critics, that on the Italian comic stage of the Cinquecento heroines of this stamp were very rare; and that it was Sienese playwrights, that is the Intronati Academy, who introduced them. In other Italian comedies, in the first half of the century and even later, female characters are presented as poorly characterised, sometimes as misogynist caricatures; and heroines of comic plots figure largely

as passive prizes for whom the male characters compete. This tendency reflected what had been the case in plays by Plautus and Terence, the primary models for *commedia erudita*. Heroines of Italian comedies were granted minimal stage time, and the lines given to them were neither numerous nor long. They were given no chance to put across a character or to express a point of view.[19]

In Italian Cinquecento drama, the decision to grant stage time to heroines was taken first of all not in comedies, but in tragedies and pastoral dramas. A little later, when professional actresses began to dominate the stage, the situation changed in comedy too; but many of the comic plots used and exploited by those actresses had elements traceable back to Intronati comedies. The theatergram of the faithful, constant, heroine who takes her own initiatives was also influenced by models from romance, and by hagiographic religious drama. On stage it is found first in Sienese plays, including some which precede the time of the Intronati. It was then copied and followed only cautiously by playwrights in other Italian centres.

Let us summarise the treatment of dramatic heroines in other Sienese comedies. *Amor costante* (1536) continues the prediliction of the Intronati (or perhaps of Alessandro Piccolomini) for stories in which characters who are closely tied by family or amorous relationships obstinately refuse to recognise each other through disguises, as had been the case of Flamminio with the disguised Lelia. The heroine of *Amor costante* finds herself as a servant, unrecognised, in the household of her own father; and her husband, believed lost, serves the same family also unrecognised. In *Alessandro* (1544), an aristocratic engaged couple from Sicily become separated by political upheavals and turn up separately in exile in Pisa, the girl disguised as a boy and the young man disguised as a woman. Once again they fail to know each other; but each of them is deeply perplexed by the erotic feelings they have for an individual who seems to belong to the 'wrong' gender. Then *Hortensio* (1560-1561) takes its title from the false name adopted by its heroine Virginia, who has lived for some years in Siena in male disguise. She then feels motivated to re-disguise herself as a girl, using a second false

19 For further exploration of this point, see Andrews (1997), no. 6 in the present volume.

name, Celia, in order to start a relationship with a man with whom she has fallen in love.

Such identity games, including cross-gender impersonations, remained frequent devices for a couple of centuries in European comedies, comic operas, and even serious operas. Some of the resultant dramas remain in the repertory, accepted by modern audiences: in the comic sector we could draw up a list of favourites which extends from Shakespeare to Mozart. All these plots give more scope and freedom to female roles than is granted by dramas derived more closely from ancient Roman comedies. It can be stressed, at the price of some repetition, that many theatergrams traceable back to Intronati plays were frequently reused, by later dramatists and by scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte*, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This is most particularly true of the main story line of *La Pellegrina*, the comedy which we shall examine in conclusion.

Like *Amor costante* which was formally attributed to Piccolomini, *La Pellegrina* makes use of a narrative trope taken from popular romance: in this case the story of an obstinately faithful and chaste wife who travels the world searching for her lost husband. The tale's antefact, as communicated in this drama is a complex one. Some time ago, the heroine Drusilla secretly married a young Pisan named Lucrezio, in her native city of Lyon.[20] Then Lucrezio was recalled by his family to Pisa, and never returned to France. Drusilla therefore travels to Pisa to find him, disguised as the anonymous 'pilgrim woman' of the play's title. The audience learn very soon, from Lucrezio himself, that he had not abandoned Drusilla out of inconstancy: rather he had received from Lyon a false but convincing report that she was dead. The play's dénouement naturally reveals the truth, and reunites the couple; but the suspense is prolonged, and the happy ending postponed, by a set of complex misunderstandings which involve many other characters. This produces a sentimental comedy which, in the 1560s when it was originally composed, can be said to have invented a new dramatic genre. In a crucial dialogue

20 The original manuscript version of the script made her a Spaniard from Valencia. Her changed nationality was a salute to Christine of Lorraine, the French bride at the 1589 Florentine wedding.

(2.7), Lucrezio has decided to consult this anonymous 'Pilgrim', newly arrived in town, who has acquired the reputation of being a kind of wise woman or healer. The dilemma which Lucrezio wants to solve is a new formal engagement to another woman, not wanted by him but imposed by his family, and which he wants to find an acceptable way of cancelling. He no longer recognises his wife, disguised and veiled as she is; she on the other hand knows who he is. Drusilla therefore should have the advantage in their exchange: she can interrogate this apparently unfaithful husband, and discover the reasons for his behaviour. Instead, however, their first meeting is a failure, for her as well as for him. Lucrezio cannot bring himself to explain his position fully and clearly; Drusilla therefore misunderstands his feelings; and the couple separate in a fog of painful incomprehension:

> LUCREZIO Avete dunque a sapere che pochi dí sono io presi moglie e non prima l'andai a vedere che se le scopersero certi umori di pazzia, di modo che a certe ore dice e fa cose stravaganti.
> PELLEGRINA [DRUSILLA] Compassionevol caso certo, tanto piú che dovevate aver amata prima questa giovane.

> [LUCREZIO You must know, then, that a few days ago I was betrothed, but before I even visited the girl there appeared in her certain deranged humours, so that from time to time she says and does extravagant things. / DRUSILLA A pitiful case indeed, especially since you must have loved the young lady to begin with.]

(Straight away, Drusilla asks the question which mosts concerns her).

> LUCREZIO Cotesto no, ch'io mi disposi a pigliarla solamente a persuasione de' miei.
> PELLEGRINA Dovete almeno averle posto amore, da che l'avete presa.
> LUCREZIO Manco, perché ci sono stato appena due volte.
> PELLEGRINA Avetele voi dato l'anello?
> LUCREZIO Non ancora, e questo mi consola un poco, ch'altrimenti sarei disperatissimo. Ma perch'io non sono anco legato, desidero d'intender bene la qualità di questo male.
> PELLEGRINA Quando il male fosse disperato, avreste forse animo di rompere il parentado?

LUCREZIO La nobiltà che mostra la vostra presenza mi fa parlar con voi liberamente. L'inclinazione mia, signora, sia la cosa come si voglia, è di non volere questa moglie.

[LUCREZIO Well, no: in fact I was moved to take her only by the persuasions of my family. / DRUSILLA At least you must have come to love her, after having accepted her? / LUCREZIO Not even that, since I have only seen her twice. / DRUSILLA Have you formally exchanged rings? / LUCREZIO Not yet, and this is some comfort, for otherwise I should be truly desperate. But since I am not yet bound to her, I want to understand fully the nature of her illness. / DRUSILLA And should her malady prove to be beyond cure, would you then consider breaking off the match? / LUCREZIO The nobility apparent in your bearing encourages me to speak freely. Madam, however things stand, my true inclination is to avoid this marriage.]

(Lucrezio already feels an inexplicable attraction to this woman. But his priority is still his wish to get rid of this new commitment. For a few exchanges, the dialogue takes on a coldly practical tone, and Drusilla efficiently plays out her role of impartial counsellor: –)

PELLEGRINA Se voi avete quest'animo, perché cercate di farla vedere?

LUCREZIO Vorrei chiarirmi del vero col parere di persone esperte, per aver poi con suo padre scusa piú ragionevole, sendo la cosa nel modo ch'io dubito.

PELLEGRINA Questo vostro consiglio è da uomo savio, e mi par abbiate una gran ragione a non voler seguire queste nozze, perché di questi simili umori non se ne guarisce mai bene e si può dubitare che i figli che nascono di simili donne non tengano anch'essi del medesimo difetto. Ed oltre alla miseria d'aver per casa una moglie tale, e' pare che apporti una certa vergogna.

LUCREZIO Voi mi confermate nella medesima resoluzione. Ma vorrei far questo passo con buona grazia di suo padre, e di quelli che mi fecero fare questo parentado quasi per forza.

PELLEGRINA Perché quasi per forza? Non era la giovane conveniente alle qualità vostre?

LUCREZIO Conveniente sí; quanto a questo, ma nella cosa delle mogli non è come in molti altri affari, che quando l'uomo non può avere quello ch'e' vorrebbe, dee volere quello che si può.

Perché chi non può aver quella ch'e' vorrebbe non ne ha da volere alcuna.

PELLEGRINA Mi maraviglio che in questa città ad un par vostro, che mostra d'esser de' primi nobili, ne sia stata dinegata alcuna. Che impedimento aveste voi?

[DRUSILLA If that is your intention, why do you want me to see her? / LUCREZIO I would like to understand things better, from an expert point of view, so that if things are as I suspect I would have more reasonable grounds to present to her father. / DRUSILLA That is a wise course of action, and it seems to me that you have good reason not to accept this marriage, because conditions like those are not properly treatable; and one can fear that children born of such women might themselves develop the same defect. So as well as the unhappiness caused by having such a wife, there can be some degree of shame. / LUCREZIO You confirm me in what I had already resolved. But I should like to take this step without offending her father, or those around me who almost forced me into the match. / DRUSILLA Forced you? How so? Was the young woman not suitable to your rank? / LUCREZIO Quite suitable, as far as that is concerned. But marriage affairs are not like other transactions, where if a man cannot have what he would like he must like what he can have. In this case, if he cannot have the woman he wants, he may prefer to have none. / DRUSILLA I marvel that a man like you, clearly among the most nobly born, should be refused any woman in the city. What obstacle did you encounter there?]

(At this point Lucrezio could have told the whole of his story – in which case the drama would end immediately with Drusilla's relief at understanding what really happened. Instead, he speaks allusively, and misleads Drusilla in to believing that he has fallen in love with a third woman who in fact does not exist. The spectator is able to perceive all this; and so, as in the dialogue quoted earlier from *Gl'ingannati*, a strong dramatic irony is created:)

LUCREZIO A voi, signora, non possono importare i fatti miei, ed a me apporta estremo dolore il ricordarmene o qui o altrove. Basta che mi sono stati rotti i miei disegni, e non c'è piú rimedio.

PELLEGRINA (*A parte*) Ahi, parti che mi sia stato crudele?

LUCREZIO Che dicevate, signora?
PELLEGRINA Dico che la fortuna vi è stata crudele.
LUCREZIO E di che maniera! Ed anco non sazia, ha voluto pormi adesso in questo nuovo travaglio.
PELLEGRINA Voi non sète solo a provar la crudeltà della fortuna: ancor io ne sento la mia parte. Ché a pena avevo preso un marito tutto secondo il cuor mio, e l'iniqua mia sorte me n'ha privata; e per sua colpa mi trovo in cosí lungo pellegrinaggio, e mi era fermata qui per rinvenire una mia cara gioia e di gran valuta. Ma per quello ch'io intendo, ho perduto i passi.
LUCREZIO Vedete, di grazia, se per cotesto affare io posso esservi di giovamento alcuno, ch'io non desidero cosa maggiormente che adoperarmi in vostro servigio.

[LUCREZIO Madam, my affairs cannot interest you, and to me it brings great pain to reconsider them, here or elsewhere. Suffice it to say that my hopes were shattered, and there is no more remedy. / DRUSILLA (*Aside*) So – he left me cruelly to my fate. / LUCREZIO I beg your pardon, madam? / DRUSILLA I said . . . you have felt the cruelty of fate. / LUCREZIO In all its force! And now, still not satisfied, Fortune faces me with this new trouble. / DRUSILLA You are not alone in suffering the cruelties of Fortune: I can still feel my share of them. I had scarcely taken the husband of my heart's choice, when my evil luck snatched him away from me. That is why I have embarked on this long pilgrimage; and I had stopped here to repossess a jewel of mine, of great worth and very dear to me. But from what I now hear, I have journeyed in vain. / LUCREZIO Please consider whether I can be of any help to you in your search, for I desire nothing more fervently than to employ myself in your service.]

(Lucrezio naturally does not understand that he himself is the 'jewel of great worth': his obtusity is similar to that displayed by Flamminio in *Gl'ingannati*. He still continues to feel a mysterious inexplicable attraction to this unknown woman – an obligatory feeling for such a situation of romantic cross purposes).

PELLEGRINA Già avreste potuto fare assai, ma ora ho trovata la cosa disperata: non c'è piú modo.
LUCREZIO Ne sento gran dispiacere, perché avrei voluto farvi

vedere l'animo mio.
PELLEGRINA Io son chiara del vostro animo, senz'altra prova.
RICCIARDO Signora . . . ! (G. Bargagli 1971, 129-31) [21]

[DRUSILLA You could have done a great deal, once, but now I find that the affair is hopeless. There is no more to do. / LUCREZIO I am truly sorry for this, because I should have liked to give you proof of my feelings. / DRUSILLA I think I now understand your feelings, without further proof. /RICCIARDO (*Calls*) My lady!]

At this point Drusilla's servant-companion, who has been listening to the conversation with increasing anxiety, finds a pretext for interrupting it and calling her away. When Lucrezio exits, Drusilla thinks she now understands his feelings, whereas in fact she has got them completely wrong.

For its time, this long dialogue is an exceptional piece of dramaturgy. Its exchanges reflect a careful, delicate approach to the psychology of its two characters, restricting to a minimum the exterior rhetoric which other Italian dramatists were tending to develop and to exaggerate. The balance maintained between the tones of comedy and sentimental drama, is exceptional, in a cultural climate which still tended to impose strict stylistic divisions between different dramatic genres. Into this allusive emotional exchange, the authors (probably Girolamo Bargagli and Fausto Sozzini, working as a team) even risk inserting a quick piece of comic word-play, when Drusilla says something too revealing and then corrects it:

PELLEGRINA (*A parte*) Ahi, parti che mi sia stato crudele?
LUCREZIO Che dicevate, signora?
PELLEGRINA Dico che la fortuna vi è stata crudele.

21 Cerreta's text, reproduced here, is based on the autograph manuscript of Girolamo Bargagli himself, from the 1560s. It therefore does not contain a number of small amendments which appear in the printed editions of the play, which move the language in a Sienese direction: these were reproduced by Nino Borsellino in his 1962 anthology. Those early printed versions, which also give a French rather than Spanish identity to Drusilla, became the ones subsequently known to seventeenth-century readers and imitators: they therefore have a validity of their own for theatre historians.

> [Drusilla (*Aside*) So – he left me cruelly to my fate. / Lucrezio I beg your pardon, madam? / Drusilla I said . . . you have felt the cruelty of fate.]

This rapid re-writing of one's own words, making use of rhyme or assonance (and therefore needing to be reflected in English by a non-literal translation), was seen more often on Renaissance stages in a farcical context. It would be used by a scurrilous servant, who needs to make a rapid re-adjustment of a subversive remark partially heard by the employer at whom it is directed. Here it ranks as a comic device slipped into a more serious confrontation.

For the duration of the dialogue between Lucrezio and Drusilla, the spectator's attitude and reactions are kept in a careful balance. On the one hand we participate emotionally, feeling compassion for the undeserved sufferings of the fictional characters. At the same time we can be distanced from them by Lucrezio's failure to recognise his wife, an obtusity which provokes the same comic exasperation which we felt towards Flamminio in some scenes in *Gl'ingannati*. Most of all, this scene from *La Pellegrina* pays an equal amount of attention and respect to the emotions, most of all to the confusions, experienced by both the characters concerned, male and female. There had been nothing comparable to this in other dramatic scripts composed in Italy before the 1560s. Afterwards, though, the idea of writing lovers' dialogues in which the man fails to recognise the woman, with the consequent verbal and sentimental cross-purposes, was taken up by other dramatists in the peninsula, and not only in comedies. The landmark pastoral play *Filli di Sciro* (Phyllis of Skyros) composed in 1605 by Guidubaldo Bonarelli della Rovere contains some moving scenes which imitate this exchange from *La Pellegrina*. In Flaminio Scala's comic scenarios, published in 1611, there are half a dozen scenes with a similar content, covering between them a range of very different tones. We could also turn to Shakespeare: in *As You Like It* the prolonged central confrontation, between Rosalind disguised as a boy and her unperceptive lover Orlando, is a variant on the same theatergram.

All these observations have been prompted by a single scene of *La Pellegrina*; but the larger storyline which leads to the encounter between these two lovers also had considerable influence. The tale

of a wife or fiancée who travels incognita in search of the man she loves quickly became a theatergram of choice, regularly recycled in Italian scripts and scenarios during subsequent decades. The theme can be modified in various ways. We can be faced with a male 'pilgrim' or traveller, looking for a female wife or lover: there are examples of this version in scenarios by Flamminio Scala, who in his forty comic *canovacci* makes use fifteen times of the theatergram which we could label 'The Travelling Lover'. Alternatively the faithful heroine may decide to travel in male disguise, thus grafting the plot of *Gl'ingannati* on to that of *La Pellegrina*. This situation was still being used a century and a half later in both France and Italy. It is echoed in Marivaux's *La Fausse suivante* (1724); and Goldoni's *Il servitore di due padroni* (The Servant of Two Masters, 1746) offers the figure of Beatrice, the *Innamorata* mask travelling yet again in male disguise. Two years later, in his *Due gemelli veneziani* ("The Two Venetian Twins"), Goldoni adopted the strategy of having the roles of two twins played by the same actor, apparently unaware that this expendient too was launched by the Intronati Academy before reappearing in many *arte* scenarios.

The Sienese contribution to comic theatre not only affected other European theatre traditions, but lasted for a long time.

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Index

Accademia degli Intronati 9, 10, 11, 14, 19, 28, 47, 51, 62, 130, 158, 189, 288, 392, 397, 397n2, 399,-401, 406-7, 410, 419, 420, 429

Agrati, Annalisa 172n5

Alberti, Carmelo 32n19, 128, 331n7

Alfonso I 193

Alfonso II d'Este 194, 199, 206

Alonge, Roberto 158n19, 399n5

An. *L'aurelia* 397, 404

An. *La Veniexiana* 80, 160, 162, 162n27, 169, 170, 170n1, 171, 171n3, 172, 172n4, 173, 175, 178, 180-3

Anderson, Michael 371

Andreini Francesco 144, 201, 206-7, 220, 222-5 237, 241, 248n20, 379; *Le bravure del Capitano Spavento* 376, 379n14

Andreini, Giovan Battista 202n20, 207, 219n22, 221, 317n17, 393; *Due comedie in comedia* 393; *La Centaura* 317

Andreini, Isabella 12, 140, 144-5, 201-4, 211, 225, 235, 236n3, 243-6, 249, 282, 373, 375-6, 381; *Fragmenti* (*Ragionamenti*) 144, 207, 211n1, 219, 220, 222, 225, 235-6, 238-9, 240n10, 241, 248; *Lettere* 144, 222, 226, 230, 235-42, 248, 250; *Mirtilla* 222-6, 235, 313-14; *Rime* 222, 224-6, 228, 235, 243, 245, 247n19

Antonio Castaldo 32n20

Aretino, Pietro 11, 22, 47, 51, 51n1, 53-4 56, 57, 59, 61-66, 82, 100n3, 102, 120, 169, 170, 392; *Cortigiana* 22n7, 51n1, 56-60 62-65, 82-3, 100, 102, 120, 169; *Il Filosofo* 64; *Il Marescalco* 20n5, 22, 58-9, 62-6, 169; *La Talanta* 30, 43, 51, 53, 58, 59, 60, 62, 65-6 100n3, 101, 170; *L'Ipocrito* 59; *Ragionamenti* 169

Archilei Vittoria 186, 295, 206

Ardelia 171, 171n3, 172, 172n5

Aristotele 279

Ariosto, Ludovico 43n25, 45, 62, 76-8, 80-7, 143, 151, 151n2, 153, 155, 160-1, 161n26, 170-1, 182, 278, 311, 374, 391; *I suppositi* 85, 85n26, 271, 258, 278, 279, 287; *La Cassaria* 62, 78-9, 83-4, 84n25, 85, 85n26, 206, 278, 397; *La Lena* 82-3, 160, 351n5; *Orlando furioso* 43n26, 161n26, 170-1, 216, 240, 311, 374, 391n26; *Negromante* 81, 81n19, 83, 151-4

Armani, Vincenza 200-2, 206, 216, 220, 373-4

Argenti, Agostino *Lo sfortunato* 313

Bandello, Matteo 357, 361, 390

Banham, Martin 259, 260n1, 297,

297n31
Barasch, Frances 282n11, 353n9
Baratto, Mario 19n2
Barbieri, Nicolò 385-6
Barlachia, Domenico 198, 198m15
Bargagli, Girolamo 81, 159, 159n22; *Dialogo dei Guochi* 401, 406; *La pellegrina* 159, 159n22, 287, 356, 362, 397, 397n2, 401, 401n6, 402, 404n8, 405, 405n10, 406, 413, 422, 427, 427n21, 428-9
Bargagli, Scipione Trattenimenti 401
Bartoli, Francesco Saverio 220
Basso, Jeanine 238; *Répertoire* 236, 238, 238n8, 247
Beame, Edmond M. 160n23
Beaumarchais 66, 150; *Le Mariage de Figaro* 66
Beccari, Agostino 206; *Il Sacrificio* 28, 205, 223, 279n5, 313, 404
Beolco, Angelo (Ruzante) 80, 153, 169, 247, 296, 392; *Dialogo Facetissimo* 296; *La pastorale* 316n15
Belando, Vincenzo 228n33, 247n19
Belo, Francesco *El beco* 80, 80n16; *Il Pedante* 20n5, 80, 154, 154n10
Belisario, Bulgarini *Gli scambi* 397-8, 404n8; *Hortensio* 397, 404, 421
Bentivoglio, Ercole Geloso 80, 80n16
Bergman, Ingmar *The Seventh Seal* 214
Bernhardt, Sarah 186, 374
Bernardini, Ottavio 216
Bianchi, Lodovico 247n19
Bibbiena 62, 71, 72, 76, 79, 158; *Calandra* 30, 32-6, 44, 61, 69-71, 73, 78-9, 83, 102n4, 157, 157n16, 197-8, 206, 215, 278n3, 399n4
Bigliazzi, Silvia 15, 347
Bindoni 81n19, 81n20
Blasucci, Luigi 164
Black, Robert 158n19, 288n22, 290n25
Boccaccio, Giovanni 131, 134-6, 156, 156n15, 190, 320, 385n1; *Decameron* 131, 156, 156n15, 190, 279, 310n7; *Filocolo* 156n15; *Filostrato* 156n15; *Fiammetta* 156n15, 190, 385n18; *Teseida* 156n15
Boiard, Matteo M. 311
Bohadlová, Kateřina 368n24
Bonarelli, Guidubaldo *Filli di Sciro* 428
Booth, W.C. 64n9
Borlenghi, Aldo 19n1
Borsellino, Nino 19n1, 34n21, 35, 81n18, 154n10, 159n21, 159n22, 397n1, 405n10, 427n21
Botarga, Stefanelo 354n11
Bourqui, Claude 104n8, 355
Boyer 214n9
Bradbrook, Muriel 75-6, 79, 80
Brandon, James R. 185
Brandt 242n12
Brantôme, Pierre de Bourdeille 175n9, 197, 215
Briccio, Giovanni 103-4, 104n9, 106; *La dispettosa moglie* 106-7; *Pantalone imbertonao* 104, 106; *Pantalone Innamorato* 104n9
Brooke, Arthur 357, 362
Brown, Pamela Allen 282n11, 291, 375n7
Bruni, Domenico *Prologhi* 385n18
Bruno, Giordano *Il Candelaio* 20n5, 43, 80
Bryce 175, 175n9
Buonarroti, Michelangelo 202, 207
Bullough, Geoffrey 342

Caccini, Francesca 202, 204, 207, 228n33; *Primo libro delle musiche* 208
Caccini, Giulio 193-5, 202, 206-7
Cairns, Christopher 58n664, 65-6, 82, 100n2, 160n23, 183
Calderón, Pedro *La vida es sueño* 323
Calmo, Andrea 52, 103, 153, 159, 169-70, 228, 247, 247n19, 316n16, 385n18; *Egloghe Pastorali* 316; *Lettere* 384, 385n18
Calvi, Lisanna 327n2, 347
Calvino, Italo *Cibernetica e Fantasmi* 335n10, *Il castello dei destini incrociati* 335n10
Callas, Maria 374
Calvo, Ojeda 342n11
Campbell, Julie D. 235
Campiglia, Maddalena Flori 313
Canali, Isabella 206, 220
Canali 206
Candeloro, Francesco 247n19
Cano, Marco 252
Canthara, Agostino 420
Caro, Annibale Straccioni 80
Carlo Emanuele 237
Carter, Tim 195
Castelvetro, Giacopo 308n4
Castiglione, Baldassarre 69, 70-2, 102, 157, 158; *Il libro del Cortegiano* 102, 102n4, 157, 171, 218n18, 402
Catalano, Michele 213n6
Catoni, Giuliano 341n12
Cavalleri 238n8
Cavalcalupo 82n21
Cavalcanti, Bartolomeo 55n4
Cecchi, Giovan Maria 80, 80n17, 87, 278n3; *Gl'incantesimi* 80n16; *I dissimili* 80n16
Cecchini, Pier Maria 208, 247n19, 380; *Discorsi intorno alle comedie* 196, 208, 281
Celse, Mireille 158
Cerretta, Florindo 159n20, 19n1, 21n6, 27n12, 43n26, 397n2, 405n10, 407n11, 427n21
Chaplin, Charlie 382
Chapman 75
Chatman, Seymour 64n9
Chaudhuri, Sukanta 309n6
Charles V 404
Christine of Lorraine 422n20
Clare, Janet 165
Clubb, Louise George 13, 13n2, 158, 158n19 264, 281n7, 282, 282n10, 288n22, 287n21, 290n25, 307, 309, 312n12, 313, 316, 316n16, 356, 371, 398, 413
Combi, Giovan Battista 238n7, 250
Condell 278
Congreve, William 150
Conzatti 238, 238n8
Contarini, Gasparo 65
Contile, Luca 247n19
Contrini, Jacomo 316n16; *Lite amorosa* 316
Cooper, Helen 318-19, 321
Cooper, Richard 197n14
Corsi 193
Corsini 130, 332
Costa, Margherita 228n33, 247n19, 248n19
Costa, Tommaso 385, 385n18
Crinò, Anna Maria 203, 203n23
Crivello 72n4, 171, 171n3, 171n4, 172, 172n4
Croce, Giulio Cesare (Bertoldo) 384-5; *Astuzie* 384, 385n18
Cruciani, Fabrizio 77n10
Cusick, Suzanne G. 202-4

Da Ponte 150
Dafne 193, 207
Dashwood, J.R. 88
Davico Bonino, Guido 19n1, 27n13, 69n2, 71n3, 83n24, 84n25, 397n1
De Angelis, Francesca Romana 211n1, 216, 220n24
De Gregorio 341n12
Dekker 76
Del Mazza, Lotto *I Fabii* 195, 206
Dent, R.W. 311m10
de Bourdeille, Pierre 175n9, 215
de l'Esperonnière, Antoine 214
de Rezende, André 385n18, 385n18
degl'Innocenti, Luca 145
de' Medici, Alessandro Pazzi 216n13
de' Medici, Caterina 197, 206, 215
de' Medici, Cosimo I 405
de' Medici, Ferdinando 405
de' Medici, Lorenzino Aridosia 152
de' Sommi, Leone 200; *Irifile* 313
Della Rovere, Francesco Maria 69, 71, 72, 69, 72
della Rovere, Lavinia 222
della Porta, Giambattista 392
d'Arco, Livia 194
d'Ambra, Francesco *La cofanaria* 195, 206
de' Sommi, Leone 217
Dogberry 377
Doglio, Maria Luisa 211n1, 235
Don Carlo Emanuele (Duke of Savoy) 226, 230-1
Donatus 26, 55, 27, 55
Duchartre, Pierre Louis 372-3
Duke Ercole II d'Este 206
Duke of Amalfi 13, 25, 25n8, 27
Duke of Gonzaga 187
Duke of Urbino 85n26
d'Este, Ercole (Duke of Ferrara) 73, 74n6
da Gagliano, Marco 193
Estienne, Charles 26n10, 26n1, 31
Eales, Karen 195n12
Eriksen, Roy 165
Ercole I 193
Euridice 193, 207
Everson, J.E 88
Faccioli, Emilio 77n12
Fahy, Conor 220n25
Ferguson, Ronnie 153n9, 296n30
Fenlon, Ian 193
Ferraro, Bruno 159n22
Ferré, Marie 214
Ferrone, Siro 12, 91, 191, 211n2, 216n11, 221n26, 222n27, 228n33, 247, 372n1, 377n10, 386, 393n28
Ferroni, Giulio 19n1, 39n24
Feydeau, Georges 31, 416; *La Puce à l'oreille* 32
Fiorentino, Giovanni *Il pecorone* 352n7
Fitzpatrick, Tim 11, 111, 111n14, 203n24, 263, 265, 270, 272, 281n9, 373
Fletcher, John 75
Florimi, Giovanni 404n8
Fo, Dario 416
Foakes, R.A 322
Francesco II Gonzaga (Marquis of Mantua) 74n6, 73, 83, 84
Gabrielli, Giovanni 228n33, 247
Galli, Antimo 203n23
Gamba, Bartolomeo 338
Gambelli, Delia 372n1
Gareffi, Andrea 81
Garzoni, Tommaso 200, 218; *Piazza universale di tutti le professioni* 217
Gascoigne, George *Supposes* 279,

287, 328
Gelli, Giovan Battista 74n7, 153; *La sporta* 74n7, 153
Gillespie, Stuart 276
Giancarli, Gigio Artemio *La zingara* 229, 229n34
Giraldi Cinzio, Giovan Battista 55 *Giudizio sopra la tragedia di Canace e Macareo* 55, 55n4; *Orbecche* 206, 279, *Egle* 279n5; *Gl'ingannati* 9, 10-1, 18-20, 28-30, 32-3, 21n19, 33-5, 44-7, 47n27, 56, 61, 78, 130, 130n4, 158, 159, 189, 206, 275, 288, 290, 293, 351n5, 362, 381, 397, 397n2, 399n4, 404-5, 410-13, 416, 419n18, 425-29
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 377, 377n11
Goldoni, Carlo 31, 99, 150, 154n12, 156n14, 173, 190, 221, 280, 373, 373n4, 416, 429; *I due gemelli veneziani* 31, 154n12, 416, 429; *Il servitore di due padroni* 429; *Il teatro comico* 328, 349n3; *Locandiera* 420; *Vedova scaltra* 420; *Villeggiatura* 154n12
Goldsmith, Oliver 150
Gonzaga, Federico 86
Gordon, Mel 387n21
Gray, H.D. 342-4
Greene, Nicholas 44
Grazzini, Anton Francesco 80
Greg, W.W. 309n6
Grasso, Nicola 73 *Eutychia* 73, 73n5, 79, 157
Groto, Luigi 191, 247n19, 318n18, 357; *Hadriana* 357, 357n14, 361, 362; *Il pentimento amoroso* 313
Guarini, Giovan Battista 194 *Il pastor fido* 289, 308, 313, 313n13
Guardini, Battista 247n19
Guicciardini, Ludovico 385n18
Hadfield, Andrew 303
Hale, J.R 160n25
Hainsworth, Peter 67
Hammond, Paul 303
Hampton, Christopher 303
Henke, Robert 203n24, 219n21, 279n6, 281n9, 295n29, 308, 308n4, 309, 313, 316, 327n2, 332, 334, 336, 338, 369, 373-4
Henri II of Valois 197, 206, 215
Heminge, John 278
Horace 279
Howe, Elizabeth 150n1, 229
Hunter, G.K. 294n27
Ingegneri, Angelo 247, 247n19
Innamorati, Giuliano 82n22
James VI of Scotland 320-1; *Daemonologie* 320
Janus Sacerdos 173
Jonson, Ben 14, 75, 79, 276, 278, 292; *Volpone* 14, 44, 292
Jordan, Peter 373n2, 378n12, 384n17
Jones, Toby 384n17
Kaige, Chen 186
Katritzky, M.A. 350, 374n3
Kempe, Will 259, 262, 298
Kermode, Frank 281, 281n8, 285, 302n32, 316n14, 328, 337, 342-3, 374
Kyd, Thomas *The Spanish Tragedy* 315
Laiena, Serena 13n1, 217n17
Lacour, Léopold 214
Lalanne, Ludovic 197
Lawrence, D.H. 404
Lawrence, Frieda 404
Lea, Kathleen 103, 103n6, 111, 285, 285n16, 286n19, 317, 317n17,

327n2, 331, 331n7, 336
Lecoq, Jacques 384, 384n17
Leggatt, Alexander 275n1
Lever, J.W. 300
Lidia da Bagnacavallo 213n6
Lollio, Aberto *Aretusa* 313
Locatelli, Basilio 331-2, 335-6, 355, 362, 391
Lorch, Jennifer 213n6
Lovarini, Emilio 172n6
Lucchesi, Valerio 67
Lyly, John 300; *Campaspe* 28n14
Klapisch-Zuber 129n3
Macchiavelli, Niccolò 47, 62, 76, 151, 151n3, 152-5, 160n25, 162-4, 187, 199; *Clizia* 44, 80, 151, 153, 157, 165, 179, 187-9, 192, 206, 278n3, 293, 392, 399n4; *La Mandragola* 45, 79, 160, 162
MacNeil, Anne E. 202-3, 211n1, 217n17, 218n18, 224n29, 236n3, 236n4
Mann, Caroline 176
Mantovano, Publio Philippo 76, 86; *Formicone* 85, 86n28
Margherita of Savoy 187
Marino, Giovanbattista 203, 219; *Adone* 203
Marivaux 150, 420; *La Fausse suivante* 429
Marrapodi, Michele 13, 13n3, 16, 349n1, 353n9, 361n17, 394
Martinelli, Caterina 188
Martinelli, Tristano 294n28, 365, 376-77, 377n10
Mariti, Luciano 103n5, 107n12, 271, 287n19
Marotti, Feruccio 131b6, 134, 317n17, 201, 222n27, 236, 240-2, 354n13, 372n1
Marx Brothers 382, 383; *A Night at the Opera* 105
Marx, Harpo 380, 383
Mazzi, Curzio 399n5
McFarland, Thomas 309n6
McKendrick, Malveena 215
Melchiori, Giorgio 352n7
Melzi, Robert C. 290n24
Molière 9, 14, 104, 104n8, 105-7, 150, 173, 221, 258, 264, 267, 271-2, 287, 303, 352n7, 379n13, 388, 388n22, 420; *L'Avare* 106, 110, 271; *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* 106, 264-5, 299, 379n13; *L'École des femmes* 44, 105, 216; *Le Misanthrope* 107, 272; *Le Médecin Malgré* 269; *Tartuffe* 216, 272, 303
Molinari, Cesare 213, 216, 264, 372n1, 374n6
Momigliano, Attilio 179
Monteverdi, Claudio 191; *Lamento di Arianna* 187, 204, 207, 208; *Orfeo* 193, 207
Montemayor, Jorge de, *Diana* 275
Monroe, Marilyn 186, 374
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 150, 422; *The Marriage of Figaro* 420
Mulryne, J.R. 124
Munday, Anthony *Fidele and Fortunio* 328, 352n7
Nashe, Thomas 319, 320
Neri, Ferdinando 285, 285n16, 317, 317n17, 327, 363
Newbigin, Nerida 19n1, 20n3, 25n8, 158n18, 159n21, 397
Newcomb, Anthony 194, 194n11, 195, 199, 200, 217n17
Nicholas, Elizabeth 176, 216n12, 369
Nicoll, Allardyce 272, 372, 373
Oddi, Sforza 392; *Erofilomachia*

310n7
Ottonelli, Gian Domenico 212-3, 221
Padoan, Giorgio 69n1, 69n2, 71n3, 72n4, 153n8, 157n16, 160, 160n24, 169, 170, 170n2, 171-2, 172n4, 172n6, 173, 174n7, 175, 179, 181, 296n30
Palekar, Amol 186
Pandolfi, Vito 93-4, 99, 100, 113, 239, 241, 372n1, 381n16
Parabosco, Girolamo 80, 169, 228, 247n19; *La notte* 80n16
Pasini 81n19, 81n20
Pasqualigo, Alvise 247n19; *Gl'intricati* 313, 316, 338, 339, 364, 367; *Il fedele* 352n7
Pasquati, Giorgio 216, 374
Pavoni, Giuseppe 140n12, 202
Penman, Bruce 29n16, 160n23, 160n25
Perocco, Daria 235n1, 235n2, 236, 236n3, 237n5, 237n6, 242n12, 243, 244n15, 247n18
Peverara, Laura 194, 217n17
Pellegrini, Ettore 399n5
Piccolomini, Alessandro 28, 283, 283n13, 289, 342n13, 397, 397n2, 402-9, 412, 421-2; *Alessandro* 159, 287, 353n8, 392, 397, 402, 403, 405, 422; *Amor costante* 159, 190, 396, 399n4, 404, 407, 421-2; *Annotazioni alla Poetica di Aristotile* 407
Pieri, Marzia 19n1, 193, 207, 308n5, 316n15, 338n11, 397n2
Pino, Bernardino 247n19
Pirrotta, Nino 195, 195n12, 202, 202n22
Plautus 21, 52, 55, 55n3, 60, 76, 78, 85, 86n29, 150, 152, 153; *Aulularia* 150, 153, 189, 279, 290, 371, 378, 389, 420; *Bacchides* 85; *Amphitryon* 32n19; *Menaechmi* 30; *Miles gloriosus* 60n7; *Pseudolus* 60n7
Poliziano Orfeo 78n13
Pope Leo X 81
Porcacchi 82n21
Propp, Vladimir 335n10, 368; 368n24
Purdon, Noel 316n14, 319n20
Puteanus, Erycius 236, 236n3
Poulton, Mike 327n1
Purkiss, Diane 311, 311n9
Rojas, Fernando de *La celestina* 385
Salingar, Leo 34n21, 35, 36, 275, 275n2, 284n14, 290n24, 307n1, 352n7, 416n16
Salerno, Henry F. 131n6
Salutati, Barbara 187
Sampson, Anthony 75n9, 308n5
Sbrocchi, Leonard G. 160n23
Sbordoni, Chiara 145
Scala, Flaminio 127, 131, 131n6, 132n9, 134, 134n10, 135-9, 140, 143-5, 225-6, 237, 244, 281, 317, 317n17, 330, 331n5, 332-6, 347, 349-50, 353, 354n13, 355, 357, 358-63, 363n18, 363n19, 365, 367-8, 368n24, 376n9, 381, 387n21, 389-90, 393, 429; *Alvida* 336, 365; *Il pellegrino fido amante* 239n9, 330; *Il Teatro delle Favole Rappresentative* 354; *Il finto negromante* 362; *Il vecchio geloso* 135, 145, 245; *Isabella astrologa* 244; *Isabella gelosa* 244; *Li tragici successi* 359; *L'Arbore incantato* 317, 317n17, 366; *La creduta morta* 131, 358, 360; *La pazzia d'Isabella* 140-1, 202, 244, 206; *La sposa* 244n17; *La*

forsennata principessa 140, 142
Schubert, Franz 377
Scott, Laurence 368n24
Scève, Maurice 197n14, 198
Seneca 278, 371
Senese, Lucrezia 215
Seragnoli, Daniele 19n2, 32n20, 283n13, 397n3, 401, 404, 406, 408
Serlio, Sebastiano 174; *Secondo Libro di Perspettiva* 174n8
Shewring, Margaret 134
Shakespeare 13, 14, 30, 36, 42, 135, 150, 155, 188, 255, 257-9, 263-4, 272-3, 275-8, 284, 287-91, 295-6, 300, 302-3, 307, 310-11, 315-18, 320-4, 327n1, 328, 340-5, 349-53, 355-7, 361-3, 366-8, 372, 377, 381, 387, 389, 394, 413, 416n16, 420, 422, 428; *All's Well That Ends Well* 287, 289, 293-4; *As You Like It* 287, 298, 428; *The Comedy of Errors* 30, 331n8, 105, 291, 300; *Cymbeline* 287, 289, 291; *Hamlet* 143, 302, 353, 371; *Henry IV* 183, 292, 296, 387; *King Lear* 302; *Love's Labour's Lost* 263, 289-93, 300-1, 351; *Macbeth* 321; *Measure for Measure* 289, 291, 300; *The Merchant of Venice* 107, 183, 257, 258, 289, 295-7, 300-1, 388; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 284, 287, 290, 292, 294, 300, 352, 352n7, 378; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 285, 287, 289, 301, 307, 308n2, 310, 312, 315-7, 318, 320, 322, 324, 333, 349, 366; *Much Ado About Nothing* 289, 291, 299, 359, 381; *Othello* 287, 295, 302; *Pericles* 289; *Romeo and Juliet* 287, 289, 302, 353, 356-61, 389-90, 390n25; *The Taming of the Shrew* 183, 287, 289, 291, 294, 301; *The Tempest* 15, 289, 291, 301, 317, 327-29, 331-6, 338, 340-1, 344-5, 351, 363, 365, 367, 389, 390n25; *Twelfth Night* 30-1, 34, 40, 75-6, 275, 288, 290-1, 293, 300, 362, 381, 410, 413, 416, 417n17; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* 275, 289-90, 301; *Winter's Tale* 291, 301;
Snyder, Susan 353n10
Speroni, Sperone 55n4, 170n2, 181n14
Tasso, Torquato 224, 219; *Aminta* 229, 280, 308, 313, 313n13, 314
Taviani, Ferdinando 12, 156, 198-9, 211, 212, 212n3, 214-19, 220n23, 221, 235n1, 237n5, 317n17, 372n1, 375
te Kanawa, Kiri 186
Terence 21, 55, 76-7, 85, 86n29, 150, 152, 189; *Hecyra* 150, 152, 189, 279, 290, 298, 421
Tessari, Roberto 91, 91n1, 99, 201, 235n2, 372n, 235n2, 379n14
Testaverde, Anna Maria 131n5, 354n12, 377n11, 391n26
Valenti, Cristina 158n19, 399n5
Valerini, Adriano 200, 216n15, 217; Orazione 200, 206-7
Valeri, Diego 179
Valier, Giovan Francesco 170-2, 170n1, 170n2, 171-2, 180-2
Varchi, Benedetto 152, 152n6; *La suocera* 152, 158, 402, 403
Vazzoler, Franco 235n2, 236, 240n10, 246n18
Vescovo, Piermario 224, 224n29, 225, 227, 235, 238, 241

Verdelot, Philippe 187
Vignali, Antonio 247n19
Vigilio, Francesco 85, 86
Vidali 81n20
Virgilio, Verucci 103-4, 106; *Li diversi linguaggi* 103, 107, 107n12, 110-11, 271, 271n7
Warner, Marina 327n1
Weaver, Elissa Barbara 213n7
Weinapple, Fiorenza 67n11
Wessner, Paul 26n9, 55n3
Wilbur, Richard 269n4
Williams, G 160n23
Wolfe, John 308n4
Woodhouse, J.R. 67
Zarotto, Girolamo 171n4
Zapperi, Ada 198
Zorzi, Lodovico 19n2, 180

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